

SHINMEN MUSASHI (GENSHIN) FUJIWARA OF MIYAMOTO

THE PATH WALKED ALONE

DOKKŌDŌ

独行道

1. I did not infringe upon the Way of successive generations.
2. I sought not pleasure for pleasure's sake.
3. I harboured no biased feelings.
4. I thought lightly of myself and profoundly of the world.
5. I succumbed not to greed for the duration of my life.
6. I held no regrets for past deeds.
7. I was never jealous of others over matters of good and evil.
8. In all things, I never despaired over parting.
9. I never held malice toward others, nor they toward me.
10. I steered clear of the path to attachment.
11. I held no preferences for anything.
12. I cared not where I lived.
13. I sought not the taste of fine food.
14. I possessed no old items of historical consequence to pass on.
15. I adhered not to superstitious beliefs.
16. Apart from weapons, I sought not superfluous trappings.
17. I spurned not death in the Way.
18. I sought not the possession of goods or fiefs for my old age.
19. I respected the deities and Buddha without seeking their aid.
20. I abandoned my body but not my honour.
21. I never drifted from the Way of combat strategy.

THE 5 RINGS

SCROLL 1

Earth

Chi-no-Maki

地の巻

Introduction

I call my Way of combat strategy¹ Niten Ichi-ryū.² This being the beginning of the tenth month of Kan'ei 20 (1643), I have climbed up Mount Iwato in the province of Higo in Kyushu,³ paid homage to Heaven, made a pilgrimage to Kannon, and face the altar as I contemplate writing down for the first time the culmination of what I have learned over many years of austere training.⁴ A warrior of Harima, my name is Shinmen Musashi-no-Kami Fujiwara-no-Genshin. I am sixty years old.⁵

I have devoted myself to studying the discipline of combat strategy since I was young. I experienced my first mortal contest at thirteen⁶ when I struck down an adherent of the Shintō-ryū⁷ named Arima Kihei. At sixteen, I defeated a strong warrior named Akiyama from the province of Tajima. At twenty-one, I ventured to the capital [Kyoto] where I encountered many of the best swordsmen in the realm.⁸ Facing off in numerous life-and-death matches, I never once failed to seize victory. Afterward, I trekked through the provinces to challenge swordsmen of various systems and remained undefeated in over sixty contests. This all took place between the ages of thirteen and twenty-eight or -nine.⁹

After turning thirty, I reminisced on past experiences and realized that my success could not be credited to a true mastery of strategy. Could my triumphs have been attributed to an innate ability in the Way of combat strategy that kept me from straying from Heavenly principles? Or was it due to flaws in the other schools of swordsmanship that I encountered? Thereafter I studied zealously from morning to night in a quest to discover the deepest principles. I was about fifty when I realized the real meaning of the Way of combat strategy. Since then, I have spent my days not needing to seek any more. Having attained the essence of the Way of combat strategy, I practice the disciplines of many arts without the need of a teacher in any of them.

As I write this dissertation, I do not appropriate terms from Buddhist law or Confucius teachings, nor do I quote old customs from ancient war chronicles and military texts in conveying the perceptions and true spirit of my school.¹⁰ With the Heavenly Way and Kannon as my mirror, I put brush to paper and commence writing this evening on the tenth day of the tenth month in the hour of the Tiger.¹¹

To begin with, combat is the mandate of warrior houses. It is incumbent on the general to practice the Way and for soldiers who fight under him to know it. No warriors these days perfectly understand what the Way of combat strategy really entails.

First, of the myriad disciplines in the world Buddhist law is the Way of salvation. The Way of Confucianism specifies precepts for those engaged in the Way of letters. Physicians practice the Way of healing various ailments. There are poets¹² who teach the Way of *waka*.¹³ Then there are those who practice tea, archery, protocol and other artistic Ways.¹⁴ In all of them, followers study their chosen discipline as they please and do so because they enjoy it. There are few, however, who practice the Way of combat because they like to.

To start with, as the term *bunbu-nidō* suggests,¹⁵ the correct Way for warriors is to possess the desire to practice the arts of both scholarship and war. If, for example, the warrior proves inept, he must make every effort to excel in his Way in accordance with his social standing.

Inquiring into the minds of samurai today, it would seem that many believe the warrior's Way demands nothing more than an unwavering preparedness for death. The Way of death, however, is by no means limited to the domain of the samurai. Priests, women, farmers and those beneath them¹⁶ are also aware of their social obligations and embody a sense of shame. They, too, are prepared to sacrifice life when the time comes, making them no different from samurai.¹⁷

For those practicing the Way of combat strategy, however, being better than others in everything is fundamental. The warrior must prevail when crossing swords with a single opponent and be victorious in a *mêlée* against many. In this way, he claims honor and distinction for his lord and for himself.¹⁸ This is achieved through superior strength in combat.

There are naysayers in the world at large who claim that studying the Way of combat strategy is futile when confronted with the reality of battle. In response to this claim, I teach that the warrior must practice his craft in such a way that it is practical and functional in all things and at all times, for this is the true Way of combat strategy.

(1) About the Way of Combat¹⁹ (一、兵法の道と云事)

In China and Japan,²⁰ adherents of this Way are referred to as “masters of strategy.” It is inconceivable for a samurai not to study this path.

In recent years, many making their way in the world as “strategists” are, in fact, exclusively engaged in swordsmanship. It was not long ago that, declaring a bequeathal of knowledge from the deities, custodians of the shrines of Kashima and Katori in the province of Hitachi created schools based on divine teachings and taught people throughout the provinces.²¹ In times long since gone, there existed what were known as the “Ten Skills and Seven Arts.”²² Strategy falls under the rubric of “Art,” albeit one that is pragmatic. Being practical, this means that it is not limited to the ambit of sword work. It is impossible to understand swordsmanship based on the principles of the sword alone. Naturally, teaching only swordsmanship will not measure up to the laws of combat [in pitched battle].

Looking at the world, I see how people peddle their arts. In addition to the various utensils of their craft, they even think of themselves as commodities for sale.²³ This is analogous to a flower and its fruit, where the fruit is, in fact, much smaller [and is more show than substance]. In any case, colorful displays of technique are flaunted in these martial art “Ways” to force the flower into bloom. Profiteers blather over this dojo or that dojo,²⁴ teaching one Way or learning another in the hope of conquering in the fray, fit the [popular] adage “Unripe martial arts are the root of serious harm.” Never a truer word has been said.

On the whole, there are four paths that can be traversed in life: the four Ways of the samurai, farmer, artisan and merchant.²⁵ First is the Way of the farmer. The cultivator arranges various tools and spends the year from spring through to fall keeping a keen eye on seasonal changes. This is the Way of the farmer.

Second is the Way of the merchant. The brewer of rice wine acquires various materials to ferment his *sake* and makes his way through life procuring commercial gain contingent on the good or bad quality of his wares. Merchants seek to generate profit to live prosperously. This is the Way of the merchant.

Third is the Way of the samurai.²⁶ It is called the warrior’s Way because the samurai fashions his own tools and knows the intrinsic virtues of his weapons.²⁷ Is it not a mark of inexperience for a samurai to be oblivious to the merits of his arms because he played no part in their production?²⁸

Fourth is the Way of the artisan. The carpenter in his Way has many different tools at his disposal and understands how to use each one. Employing his measure to follow charts with precision as he builds, he applies his skills industriously throughout his life. These are the four Ways of the samurai, the farmer, the artisan and the merchant.

The Way of combat strategy can be likened to the craft of carpentry. Comparing samurai with carpenters is related to the subject of “houses.”²⁹ We speak of noble houses, warrior houses and the “Four Houses.”³⁰ We also talk of the collapse or continuation of a house. In the arts we refer to a school or tradition as a house. It is because the label “house” is employed as such that I draw parallels with the carpenter’s Way. The word “carpenter” (*dai-ku*) is written with the two ideograms meaning “great” and “craft.” The Way of combat strategy is also a “great craft,” which is why I relate it to the carpenter’s endowments. Study the content of these scrolls carefully if you seek to become accomplished in the craft of war. Train assiduously, with the teacher serving as the needle and the student as the thread.³¹

(2) The Way of Combat Strategy—A Comparison with Carpentry (一、兵法の道、大工にたとへたる事)

A general, like a chief carpenter, must bear in mind the laws of the realm, ascertain the statutes of his province and know the rules of his house. This is the Way of the chief.³² The chief carpenter remembers measurements for pagodas and temple halls, knows construction plans for palaces and watchtowers and designates tasks to his men to ensure the project is completed. In this way, there are similarities between the chief carpenter and the head warrior.

The carpenter chooses what kind of wood is suitable for building a house. Straight timber without nodes that is pleasing to look at is reserved for the exterior pillars. For the rear pillars, lumber that is straight and strong can be used even if it has knots. Wood of the finest unblemished appearance is suitable for lower and upper rails, doors and sliding panels, even if it is slightly fragile. If the degree of durability needed in different parts of the house is carefully gauged and wood quality is selected accordingly, even a house that is constructed with gnarled, twisted timber will last for years without falling down. Wood that is knotty, warped and weak should be earmarked for scaffolding and kindling when the job is done.

The master carpenter knows who of his men are high, middle or low in terms of ability and delegates jobs that match their capabilities. Some will be tasked with making the alcoves, others the sliding screens, the lower and upper rails, ceiling work, and so on. Those lacking in skill will be deployed to lay the joists, and those with even less aptitude will be kept busy doing menial chores, such as making wedges. Work is sure to progress expeditiously and economically by properly discerning the competencies of one’s men. Things must proceed with efficiency to make headway. One must be unforgiving of shoddiness, cognizant of what is important and aware of the upper, middle and lower levels of liveliness in one’s men. One must also be able to energize momentum in the project and know limitations. These are all things the master builder sets his mind to. The principles of strategy and combat are the same.

(3) The Way of Combat Strategy (一、兵法の道)

A trooper is like a regular carpenter. A regular carpenter keeps his tools sharpened, makes his own auxiliary tools and transports them all in his toolbox. Following the master builder’s directives, he hews the pillars and beams with his ax, smoothens floorboards and shelves with his plane, shapes openwork and carves intricate ornamentations. Dutifully keeping to the schematics for every nook and cranny, he assembles even the long-roofed passageways to perfection.³³ This is the carpenter’s mandate. When a regular carpenter has learned the skills of his trade well and has absorbed the art of planning construction, he too will become a master builder.

A carpenter must have to hand tools that cut well. It is important to sharpen them whenever there is a spare moment. With these tools, he expertly fashions cabinets, bookshelves, desks, lampstands, chopping boards and even pot lids. A trooper has many qualities in common. This requires careful examination. It is imperative that the carpenter ensures that the wood he uses does not warp, the joints are aligned and the boards are planed meticulously so that they do not need to be rasped or manipulated later. This is key. Those who desire to learn the Way [of combat strategy] must take each detail contained within these scrolls to heart, scrutinizing them carefully.

(4) About This Book of Combat—The Five Scrolls (一、此兵法の書、五巻に仕立てる事)

This treatise is divided into five Ways. The quintessence for each Way is conveyed in five scrolls: Earth, Water, Fire, Wind and Ether.

In the Earth Scroll, I outline the gist of combat from the standpoint of my school. It is impossible to comprehend the true Way through swordsmanship alone. The expert learns “big things” first and then the smaller details, passing from shallow ground through to the deepest sphere of understanding. To first acquire a firm grounding in the direct and correct Way, I call the opening scroll that of “Earth.”

Second is the Water Scroll. The attributes of water represent the essence of the mind. Be a container square or round, water adjusts its form to fit the shape of the container. Water may be a small drop or a great ocean. [The deepest] Water has a sparkling hue of emerald green. I present my school in this scroll inspired by the purity of water. Through mastering the principles of sword work, the ability to triumph at will over one man means that you can defeat any man [or number of men] in the world. The mindset for defeating one man is the same as for beating one thousand or ten thousand. The strategy exercised by the general is to modify small-scale matters and apply them on a large scale, much like erecting a giant Buddha statue from a small 12-inch model. It is not easy to write about such things in detail, but the principle underlying strategy is “To know ten thousand things from knowing one thing.” With this consideration, I explain the substance of my school in the Water Scroll.

Third is the Fire Scroll. In this scroll I write about combat. Fire becomes big or small and epitomizes a mind of heated ferocity. That is why I write of war in this scroll. The Way of war, be it one-on-one combat (small-scale) or a clash of ten thousand versus ten thousand men (large-scale), is the same for all. How to make the mind “think big” or “think small” should be considered judiciously. Big things are easy to see whereas small things are not. In specific terms, with a large body of men it is a challenging task to change tactics at a moment’s notice. An individual, however, being of single mind, can alter his approach rapidly. This is what is meant by “small things being difficult to grasp.” Ponder this matter carefully. What I write in the Fire Scroll are of things that transpire in an instant. Therefore, it is critical in combat training that the warrior accustoms himself to always maintaining a steadfast spirit. Accordingly, in the Fire Scroll I expound on matters concerning war and dueling.

Fourth is the Wind Scroll. It is titled “Wind” as I do not talk about my school but of the strategy and approaches of other schools.³⁴ “Wind” is a term that denotes such things as “old trends,” “current trends” and “trends of such-and-such a house.” In the Wind Scroll I disclose specifics of strategy systems and techniques employed by other schools. It is difficult to understand the self without being acquainted with the customs of others.

In the practice of all Ways and arts, there is such a thing as a wayward spirit. You may believe that you are practicing your discipline conscientiously and are on the right path, but you will deviate from the true Way if your mind wanders. Departure from the truth becomes apparent when observed from the straight path. If you flounder in your pursuit of the true Way and your mind wanders even a little, this will lead to a colossal deviation. Too much of something is just as bad as not enough. This requires close examination.

Other schools of strategy are thought of as mainly embracing the art of swordsmanship. This is an accurate summation. The principles and techniques in my school have completely different implications. The Wind Scroll describes in detail the features of other schools to inform you of existing trends in strategy.

The fifth is the Ether Scroll. Although I call it the Ether, how can its depth and point of entrance be discerned when it is indicating emptiness? Having comprehended the truth of the Way, you can then let it go. You will find liberation in the Way of combat strategy and naturally attain a marvelous capacity to know the most rational rhythm for every moment. Your strike will manifest on its own, and hit the target on its own. All this represents the Way of the Ether. In the Ether Scroll I write of how one can spontaneously penetrate the true Way.

(5) About This School—Naming it “Nitō”³⁵ (一、此一流、二刀と名付る事)

The reason why it is called “Nitō” is because all warriors, from general to rank-and-file, are duty bound to wear two swords in their belts. In days long gone, these swords were called *tachi* and *katana*. Now they are *katana* and *wakizashi*.³⁶ It goes without saying that the warrior is never without his two swords. Whether he knows how to use them or not is another matter; but having two swords at his side is emblematic of the path of the warrior. I call my school Nitō Ichi-ryū (The School of Two Swords as One) to make known the merits of carrying two swords.

The *yari* (pike) and the *naginata* (glaive) are called “spare weapons” but they still belong in the warrior’s arsenal. In the Way of my school, it is proper procedure for novices to train by wielding a long sword in one hand and a short sword in the other. This is crucial. When the time comes to abandon life in combat, a warrior must make full use of all the weapons at his disposal. To perish with a weapon uselessly sheathed at one’s side is shameful.

Still, it is difficult to manipulate swords freely from side to side with one in each hand. The purpose of practicing Nitō is to get accustomed to using the long sword with one hand. It is standard for bigger weapons such as *yari* or *naginata* to be plied with both hands but long and short swords can most certainly be wielded with one.

It is risky to use one’s sword with both hands. You are at a disadvantage when fighting from horseback or when engaged in combat on the run, whether in swamps and muddy rice fields, on stony ground and steep paths, or in the middle of a free-for-all. If you must carry a bow, pike (*yari*), or another weapon in your left hand, your right hand is needed to brandish your sword.

That is why it is incorrect in the true Way to hold your sword with both hands. If it is too difficult to dispatch your enemy with a one-handed blow, you can resort to using both at that point. It is not such a difficult matter to comprehend.

First, we learn to simultaneously wield both swords in Nitō and become accustomed to handling the long sword freely with one hand. In the beginning, it is challenging for everyone to brandish a heavy long sword with one hand. Everything is difficult at first—the bow is hard to draw and the *naginata* is awkward to flail. Whatever the weapon, you learn to draw a strong bow as your strength increases for the task, and a sword becomes easier to swing as you become attuned to it through training. The discipline of the sword is not predicated on swiftness in the strike. I will explain this next in the Water Scroll. The basic principle to remember in this Way is that the long sword is employed in open areas and the short sword in confined spaces. In my school, victory must be attainable equally with both long and short weapons. That is why I have no established length for the swords we use. The Way of my school is to win no matter what.

The time when it is better to utilize two swords instead of one becomes evident when fighting single-handedly against multiple foes³⁷ or when you are battling in an enclosed space. I will refrain from explaining this in detail here. Suffice to say, you need to understand ten thousand things by knowing just one thing well. When you practice the Way of combat strategy, let nothing go unseen. Reflect on this closely.

(6) Knowing the Principles Behind the Two Ideograms in “Hei-hō” (一、兵法二つの字の利を知る事)

In this Way, experts in sword work are conventionally known as “strategists.” In the Way of martial arts, those who are skilled in the bow are called bowmen, those who can shoot guns are called gunners, those who carry pikes (*yari*) are called pikemen and men who wield glaives (*naginata*) are glaivemen. However, those who specialize in swords are not called long or short swordsmen. Bows, guns, pikes and glaives are all weapons in the warrior’s repertoire and so belong in the Way of combat strategy, but there is a reason why swordsmanship itself is identified as “strategy.” The origins of strategy are found in the sword. It is through the virtue of the sword that the world is governed and the warrior disciplines himself. One who embodies the virtue of the sword will single-handedly be able to defeat ten adversaries. Just as one man can topple ten men, one hundred can defeat one thousand and one thousand can beat ten thousand. Thus, in my school of strategy one man is the same as ten thousand, which is why I say that strategy encompasses all facets of the warrior’s Way.

When addressing the Way, the warrior’s path is different from those of Confucianists, Buddhists, tea masters, protocol experts and dancers. Nevertheless, different though these Ways may be, to know one Way in the broad sense means you will find commonality in all of them. It is important for all men to perfect their own Ways.

(7) Knowing the Advantages of Weapons in Combat (一、兵法に武具の利を知ると云事)

If you know the benefits of different weapons used in battle, you will be able to employ each to optimum effect when the occasion arises. The short sword is best used in a confined area or when close to the enemy. The long sword is generally useful in all situations. On the battlefield, the *naginata* is slightly inferior to the *yari*. The *yari* is useful for taking the initiative, whereas the *naginata* is more suited for making the second move. If two practitioners with equivalent experience were to face off, the one with the *yari* will prove slightly stronger. Depending on the circumstances, however, both the *yari* and the *naginata* will not be particularly advantageous in cramped areas. Nor will they be useful against an enemy under siege in a house [and vice versa]. Best employed on the battlefield, they are principally weapons for pitched battle. However, they will not be of much use if one forgets the Way and studies them as indoor weapons with intricate techniques.

As for bows, they are suitable in tactical maneuverings against an enemy in battle. Because arrows can be released in rapid succession, bows are particularly effective if deployed alongside a detachment of pikemen or units with other weapons when engaging the enemy on an open battlefield. Notwithstanding, bows are ineffective when attacking forts or assailing an enemy over 2 *ken*³⁸ away. Nowadays, it goes without saying for archery, and indeed for all the arts, that there are many flowers but not a lot of fruit.³⁹ Such “arts” are of no use when they are really needed.

Guns rule supreme when fighting from inside a castle. The gun also has many advantages in the field of battle before a clash commences. When the battle is in full swing, however, guns lose their effectiveness. One of the merits of arrows is that their trajectory can be seen as they fly through the air. On the other hand, a bullet fired from a gun is not visible and this is a downside.⁴⁰ Consider this carefully.

With horses, it is important that they are responsive to the handling of the reins and have no bad habits. For all implements of war, choose horses that are strong for walking, long and short swords that are sharp for cutting, *yari* and *naginata* that are sharply pointed for stabbing, and bows and guns that are sturdy and will not break when used.⁴¹ The warrior should avoid harboring a preference for any given weapon. Too much of one thing is just as bad as not enough. Do not imitate what others are using. Instead, take to hand weapons that are suited to you and feel right. For both generals and rank-and-file, it is harmful to entertain a strong preference for certain things. Having alternative plans is critical.

(8) About Cadence in Strategy (一、兵法の拍子の事)

All things have their own rhythm. In the case of combat, cadence cannot be mastered without substantial practice. Rhythm is evident everywhere in the world. In the Way of Noh dance, minstrels with their wind and string instruments all have their own harmonious, regular rhythms. In the Way of martial arts, releasing an arrow, firing a gun and even riding a horse have distinctive cadences. Rhythm must never be contravened in any of the arts. Rhythm is also present in things that are invisible. For the samurai, there is rhythm in how he succeeds in service or falls from grace. There is rhythm for harmony and rhythm for discord. In the Way of commerce, there is cadence in the accumulation of great wealth and a rhythm for losing it. Each Way has its own rhythm. Judge carefully the rhythms signifying prosperity and those that spell regression.

There are myriad rhythms in strategy. First, the warrior must know the cadence of harmony and then learn that of discord. He must know the striking, interval and counter cadences that manifest among big and small, fast and slow rhythms.⁴² In combat, it is critical for success to know how to adopt the “counter rhythm.” You must calculate the cadences of various enemies and employ a rhythm that is unexpected to them. Use your wisdom to detect and strike concealed cadences to seize victory. I devote much explanation to the question of cadence in all the scrolls. Consider what I record and train assiduously.

As written above, your spirit will naturally expand through training diligently from morning to night in the Way of my school’s combat strategy. I hereby convey to the world for the first time in writing my strategy for collective and individual combat in the five scrolls of Ground, Water, Fire, Wind and Ether.

For those who care to learn my principles of combat strategy, follow these rules in observing the Way:

1. Think never to veer from the Way
2. Train unremittingly in the Way
3. Acquaint yourself with all arts
4. Know the Ways of all vocations
5. Discern the truth in all things
6. See the intrinsic worth in all things
7. Perceive and know what cannot be seen with the eyes
8. Pay attention even to trifles
9. Do not engage in superfluous activities

Train in the Way of combat strategy keeping these basic principles in mind. Particularly in this Way, inability to comprehensively see the most fundamental matters will make it difficult to excel. If you learn these principles successfully, however, you will not lose to twenty or even thirty foes. First, by dedicating your energies wholeheartedly to learning swordsmanship and practicing the “Direct Way,” you will defeat men through superior technique, and even beat them just by looking with your eyes. Your body will learn to move freely through the rigors of arduous training and you will also overcome your opponent physically. Furthermore, with your spirit attuned to the Way you will triumph over the enemy with your mind. Having come so far, how can you be beaten by anyone?

In the case of large-scale strategy [implemented by generals, victory is had in many forms]: win at having men of excellence, win at maneuvering large numbers of men [effectively], win at conducting oneself properly, win at governance, win at nourishing the people, and win at conducting the laws of the world the way they are meant to be. Irrespective of the Way, knowing how not to lose to others and establishing yourself in name and stature is paramount. This is precisely what the Way of Combat Strategy is.

Twelfth Day of the Fifth Month, Shōhō 2 (1645)⁴³
Shinmen Musashi Genshin
[To] Terao Magonojō

SCROLL 2

Water

Sui-no-Maki

水の巻

Introduction

The essence of my Niten Ichi-ryū is predicated on the properties of water. As such, in the Water Scroll I explain how to enact the pragmatic principles for sword usage in my school.

It is difficult to express in writing the intricacies of this Way in the manner I would like. Even if words are insufficient, careful contemplation should heighten an intuitive understanding of the principles I am trying to convey. Take time to read this scroll and reflect on each and every word. Inattention to detail will result in many oversights in your appreciation of the path. Although the principles I outlay here are explained from the perspective of individual combat, it is important that they be interpreted as equally pertinent to battles between armies of ten thousand men. What differentiates this Way from others is the intrinsic risk that an error of judgment or moment of confusion will plunge you into bad habits.

Simply reading these scrolls will not lead you to mastery in the Way of combat strategy. Even though the concepts espoused here were written specially for you, do not think it is a matter of simply reading, learning or emulating my instructions. Think of the principles as emanating from within your own heart, and study hard to devise ways of embodying them at all times.

(1) About the Mindset of Combat (一、兵法心持の事)

The mindset in the Way of combat must be no different from one's normal state of mind. In the course of your daily life, and when engaged in strategy, there should be no change whatsoever in your outlook. Your mind should be expansive and direct, devoid of tension, but not at all casual. Keep your mind centered, not leaning too much to one side, swaying serenely and freely so that it does not come to a standstill in moments of change. Consider this carefully.

The mind is not static even in times of calm. In times of haste, the mind does not rush. The body does not carry the mind and the mind does not carry the body. The mind should be vigilant when the body is exposed. The mind must not be absent nor be excessive. Both the high-spirited mind and the lethargic mind are signs of weakness. When the mind's exterior is weak, its interior must be strong so that the enemy cannot gauge your condition. A small man should be aware of the spirit of a larger man and a large man must know the mind of a small man.¹ Both big and small must keep their minds straight and not become trapped by preconceived notions of size.²

Be sure to maintain a spirit that is untainted and extensive. Wisdom will settle in the seat of a broad mind. It is crucial to enrich your mind and your wisdom. By enhancing your wisdom, you will be able to sense what is reasonable and unreasonable in the world and will learn the difference between good and evil. You can then see commonality in the Ways of different arts and you will not be open to deception. This is when one can be said to possess the wisdom of strategy in one's heart. Wisdom that is fundamental to the Way of combat strategy is distinctive. When you face adversity in the midst of battle and find yourself completely engaged, never forget to focus your mind on the principles of strategy as this will create within you a steadfast spirit. Study this carefully.

(2) About Posture in Strategy (一、兵法の身なりの事)

With posture, it is important to keep your face neither tilted up nor down, nor leaning to one side, nor grimacing. Your eyes should be composed and your forehead free of furrows. Wrinkles should be confined to the area between your brows. Your eyes should not roll nor blink and your eyelids should be narrowed slightly, taking in a broad view of the surroundings. The line of your head and nose should be straight, with the chin protruding slightly. The neck is upright with the nape tensed, shoulders lowered, back straight, backside in, and with the feeling that your whole body from the shoulders down is a solid entity. Push down from the back of your knees to the tips of your toes and thrust your abdomen slightly forward so that your lower back does not stoop. Insert the scabbard of the short sword into your sash, pressing it against your stomach, keeping it, as they say, "wedged in tight."

With all martial art postures, it is essential to maintain a combat posture in your everyday life and an everyday posture in combat. Study this well.

(3) About the Gaze in Strategy (一、兵法の目付と云事)

One's gaze should be expansive and far-reaching. This is the dual gaze of "looking in" (*kan*) and "looking at" (*ken*). The gaze for "looking in" is intense whereas that for "looking at" is gentle. It is of utmost importance for a warrior to see distant things as if they were close and close things as if they were distant. The warrior must know the enemy's sword without even seeing it. This is critical in combat and must be practiced attentively. Be it in small-scale combat or large-scale battle, one's gaze should be the same. It is vital to be able to see both sides without needing to move your eyes.

It will be impossible to accomplish this method of observing things during the tumult of a fight without conscientious training. Take time to thoroughly study what I have written here. Continually employ this mode of observation in your daily life so that you can apply it in any situation. Examine this carefully.

(4) About Gripping the Sword (一、太刀の持やうの事)

To grip the sword, clasp the hilt loosely with your thumb and forefinger, moderately with the middle finger and tightly with the bottom two fingers. There should be no space between your hands and the hilt. Take hold of your sword with the intention of cutting the enemy.

As you swing your sword down to cut, do not change your grip or allow your hands to tighten. Keep in mind that only the thumb and forefinger are ever so slightly manipulated when slapping, parrying or pressing the enemy's sword. Most importantly, remember to grip the sword with a thought to cutting. The way a sword is gripped is the same in both test cutting³ and in combat.

Do not allow your hands or sword to become rigid. A rigid hand is a dead hand. A fluid hand is the hand of life. Study this point carefully.

(5) About Footwork (一、足づかいの事)

When moving your feet, raise the tips of your toes slightly so that they float, and kick off strongly from your heels. Depending on the circumstances, move with large or small steps, quickly or slowly, but always in the same way as you would normally walk. There are three styles of footwork that should be avoided. They are known as "jumping feet," "floating feet" and "stomping feet."

The method of alternating footwork is known as *yin-yang*⁴—positive and negative feet—and is fundamental in strategy. This means that you should never move only one foot when cutting, retreating or parrying. Always shuffle right foot-left, right foot-left, one after the other. At no time move with only one foot. Consider this carefully.

(6) About the Five-way Stances (一、五方の構の事)

The five-way stances in swordsmanship are upper (*jōdan*), middle (*chūdan*), lower (*gedan*), left (*hidari-waki*) side and right (*migi-waki*) side. Although there are five stances, their purpose is the same—to cut the enemy. There are no other stances apart from these five. When assuming any of the stances, do not dwell too much on what it is. Think only of cutting the enemy. Whether you take a big or small stance depends entirely on what is best for the situation at hand. Upper, lower and middle stances are fundamental, whereas left- and right-side stances are advanced postures. They are to be used in places that are obstructed overhead or on the flanks. The use of left or right stances should be decided depending on the location. Do not forget that the middle stance is the cornerstone of swordsmanship. It encompasses the essence of all stances. If you look at strategy generally, you will realize that the middle stance is the seat of the general and the other four follow his lead. Understand this notion.

(7) About Sword Pathways (一、太刀の道と云事)

To know the pathway of the sword is to know its true course. To know the pathway means that you can easily wield the sword you always carry with you, even with two fingers.⁵ If you try to brandish the sword quickly, it will deviate from the correct trajectory and be difficult to handle. All you need to do is handle the sword in a manner that is calm and collected. If you insist on swinging it briskly, as you would a fan or dagger, this will cause a deviation from the sword's path and you will not be able to control it. An enemy cannot be felled by using a long sword in the same way as hacking frantically with a dagger.

When you cut downwards with a long sword, immediately return it along the same path it came. Likewise, in cutting with a horizontal blow, the sword should return along the same sideward trajectory. Whatever the direction, the sword should be moved widely and vigorously with the arms fully extended. This is the pathway of the sword.

Through mastering the five "exterior sword forms" of my school, your swings will be coherent as the sword's pathway is fixed. Be sure to train diligently.

(8) The Five Exterior Forms—Number One (一、五つのおもての次第、第一の事)

The first stance is that of the middle. Meet your enemy with the tips of your swords directed at his face. When he unleashes an attack, deflect his blade to the right with your longsword "riding" on top of his. When he redoubles, flip your tip over [assuming the upper stance] and knock his sword down from above holding it there. If he attacks a third time, cut his arms from underneath. This constitutes the first exterior form.

It is impossible to grasp the five exterior forms through simply reading about them. You must embody the movements by actual practice with swords. By attentively studying these five exterior forms, you will grasp your own sword pathway and will learn to deal with all manner of attacks thrown at you by the enemy. Appreciate that there are no other forms in Nitō apart from these five. Be sure to drill yourself in them.⁶

(9) Exterior Form Number Two (一、おもて第二の次第の事)

The second form involves cutting the enemy with a single blow from the upper stance just as he makes his attack. If he parries your blow, keep your sword at the point of contact and cut upwards from below as he redoubles. Keep cutting this way if he

attacks again. When using this approach, know that there are variations in rhythm and mindset. If you practice my school's procedures, you will master the five sword pathways and will win no matter what. Learn them well.

(10) Exterior Form Number Three (一、おもて第三の次第の事)

In the third procedure, assume the lower stance with the tips of your swords pointing down and prepare to strike upward to the enemy's wrists as soon as he launches. He may attempt to deflect and strike your longsword down. In this case, cut his upper arms with a horizontal crosscut, turning the sword to the side with a "traversing cadence" after his strike. When engaging with the enemy from the lower stance, it is essential to stop his strike with a single blow.

When using the swords from the lower stance in accordance with the pathway, you will be able to perceive all when the tempo of the fight is furious or when it is slow. Be sure to train hard with [both] your swords simultaneously.

(11) Exterior Form Number Four (一、おもて第四の次第の事)

In the fourth procedure, assume the left-side stance and strike at the enemy's hands from underneath as he attacks. If the enemy attempts to strike your sword down, carry through on your upward trajectory to cut at his wrists, extending the swing diagonally up to the height of your shoulders. This is consistent with the pathway of the sword. If your enemy attacks again, parry in line with the sword's path to come in first. This technique requires practice.

(12) Exterior Form Number Five (一、おもて第五の次第の事)

In the fifth exterior form, the swords are held horizontally in the right-side stance. As the enemy attacks, block [with the short-sword] and swing your longsword up to the upper stance from the low position and follow with a straight downward cut from above. This is essential in learning the pathway of the sword. Mastering this approach will allow you to manipulate heavy swords with ease.

I will not describe in detail the modus operandi of these procedures. Suffice it to say, by exhaustively applying these forms you will learn the Way of sword fighting in my school, master the conventional rhythms of combat, and determine how the enemy uses his sword. Practicing these techniques thoroughly each day and honing your skills in the fray will lead to certain victory, for you will be able to "read" the enemy and know how to exploit the various cadences. Study this well.

(13) The "Stance, No-Stance" Teaching (一、有構無構のおしへの事)

The teaching of "stance, no-stance" means that you must not focus your mind on assuming a particular fighting stance. Nevertheless, the five stances that I have defined can be utilized as *engarde* postures. With swords in hand, you will adopt various stances as dictated by location and circumstances, such as the posture the enemy is adopting. You must hold the longsword so that you can cut your enemy convincingly at any time. If you assume the upper stance, you can lower your longsword to the middle stance as required. From the middle stance, you can then raise the swords to adopt the upper stance again if the opportunity arises. You can also raise your longsword from the lower stance to the middle stance as needed. Again,

depending on the circumstances, bringing the swords to the center from either the left or right sides will generate the lower or middle stance. This is why I teach “There are stances, but there is no stance.”

Regardless of the situation, first and foremost the sword is held so that the enemy can be cut.

You deflect your opponent’s sword as he attacks, you can parry, slap, strike, stick to or press his sword, but the objective is to cut the enemy. If you become obsessed with the act of parrying, slapping, striking, sticking to or pressing your opponent’s weapon, the subsequent strike will lack vigor. Always remember that any stance you assume is for cutting. Practice this well.

As for large-scale strategy, the positioning of soldiers is consistent with the *engarde* stances to ultimately seize victory in battle. It is bad to [inhibit yourself and] settle [on a set stance].⁷ Contemplate this carefully.

(14)About Hitting the Enemy with a “One-Count” Strike (一、敵を打に一拍子の打の事)

The cadence of striking your enemy in “one-count” refers to the action of slashing from the optimal interval for engagement before the enemy is ready to attack. It is executed without revealing any movement before the attack or allowing your mind to become attached to anything. Stop the enemy from acting with the “one-count” strike. Take him with a single blow off the mark before he has time to contemplate drawing his sword, change his stance or launch an attack. This is the “one-count” strike. After perfecting this attacking rhythm, train to beat any opponent with it, then practice exploiting the “pause cadence” where the enemy is momentarily static between phases.

(15)About the “Two-Phase Traversing Cadence” (一、二のこしの拍子の事)

If the enemy parries or retreats as you are about to attack, feint a strike and then follow up with a second real cut just as he relaxes after backing off or parrying the first false attack. This is what is meant by the “two-phase traversing cadence.” Just reading about it will not suffice. You will only grasp it when it is taught directly.

(16)About the Strike of “No-Thought No-Form” (一、無念無相の打と云事)

When you and your opponent attack simultaneously, your body becomes the “striking body” and your mind becomes the “striking mind.” As such, your hands will also strike spontaneously with power, speed and no warning. This is the strike of “no-thought no-form” and is of the utmost importance. It is encountered often so must be learned well.

(17)About the “Flowing Water” Strike (一、流水の打と云事)

The “Flowing Water” strike is employed when the enemy you face quickly tries to back away, disengages his sword or tries to press yours. At this point, inflate your form and spirit, move forward first with your body, then with your sword, and cut him with conviction as if you were enveloping him in torpid water. Understanding this technique will make your strikes incredibly effective. You must have the measure of your enemy to achieve this.

(18)About “Opportunity Knocks” (一、縁のあたりと云事)

As you strike and the enemy counters by blocking or deflecting your blade, capitalize on this opportunity to cut his head, hands and legs. To cut through everything along the line of a single pathway of the sword is what I call “opportunity knocks.” Practice this well as it is a method with many applications. Applying this in contests is the only way to master the technicalities.

(19)About the “Flint Spark” Blow (一、石火のあたりと云事)

The “flint spark” blow is a lightning fast move executed without raising your blade in the slightest. This technique necessitates a swift and sure strike utilizing the legs, body and hands in perfect unison. It is difficult to implement without constant practice. Train assiduously to intensify the speed of the blow.

(20)About the “Autumn Leaves” Strike (一、紅葉の打と云事)

The “autumn leaves” strike entails hitting your enemy’s sword down so that he drops it.⁸ As the enemy stands before you with his sword poised, smash it down forcefully with “no-thought no-form” or the “flint spark” blow, keeping your sword fixed on his as you follow through. Succumbing to the force, he will inevitably let go of his sword. Drilling yourself in this technique will hone your ability to make the enemy release his sword. Train hard.

(21)About “Body Replaces Sword” (一、太刀にかわる身と云事)

This can also be expressed as “sword replaces body.” When cutting the enemy, the movement of the sword and body are generally not unified. Depending on the approach your opponent takes, by maneuvering your body into the attack first, your sword will strike regardless.⁹ You can also strike your opponent just with the sword without moving your body at all. It is standard, however, to move your body in to strike, with the sword following. Study this cutting method carefully.

(22)About “Striking and Hitting” (一、打とあたると云事)

Striking your enemy [with the sword] and hitting him are different. A strike must be executed with resolve, no matter what. To hit is essentially probing for prospects. Even if the enemy succumbs to a strong hit, a hit is still a hit. The strike is a conscious effort to cut through. The swordsman must understand this difference. A hit might succeed in slashing the enemy’s arms or legs

but it must be followed by a decisive strike. A hit is to touch. When you fully understand this notion, the variation between the two will become apparent. Examine the differences.

(23)About the “Body of an Autumn Monkey” (一、しうこうの身と云事)

The “body of an autumn monkey”¹⁰ refers to a procedure in which you do not extend your arms. Encroach into the enemy’s space whilst keeping your arms tucked in. Focus on getting as close as possible before executing the strike. Your torso will lag behind if you simply reach out, so try to move your whole body in close as fast as you can, with your hands tucked into your body. It is easy to pounce when you are at arm’s length. Study this well.

(24)About the “Body of Lacquer and Glue” (一、しつかうの身と云事)

The mindset underpinning “body of lacquer and glue” is to advance and attach yourself to the enemy, body to body. Stick steadfastly to the enemy with your head, body and legs. Combatants will often push their head and legs forward but leave their body behind. Attach yourself securely to the enemy, ensuring there are no gaps between your body and his. Consider this well.¹¹

(25)About “Contesting Height” (一、たけくらべと云事)

“Contesting height” is to stubbornly infiltrate the enemy’s space without shrinking your body in the slightest. As if to contest height, extend your legs, lower back and neck as you raise your face over his and lengthen yourself to assume the superior stature. It is crucial to go forward assertively. Learn this well.¹²

(26)About “Making it Bind” (一、ねばりをかくると云事)

When you and the enemy strike simultaneously, enter with the sense of binding your swords as he attempts to parry. This is not to hit with too much power but just enough to make the swords stick together firmly. When your sword has fused to the enemy’s through the opposition parry, you can then advance with certainty.¹³ There is disparity between “binding” and “tangling.” Binding the swords is controlling, whereas tangling them is weak. Understand this distinction.

(27)About “Body Smashing” (一、身のあたりと云事)

The instant you penetrate your opponent’s space, smash into him with your whole body. Crash your left shoulder into the enemy’s chest, turning your head slightly as you do so. Synchronizing your breathing, smash into him vehemently with the aim of rebounding off the impact. Through mastering this technique, you can knock your opponent back ten or twenty feet. The shock will be so great that he may even die from it. Train hard in this procedure.¹⁴

(28)About the “Three Parries” (一、三つのうけの事)

There are three methods for parrying an attack. First is the “beat parry” in which you deflect the enemy’s sword over your right shoulder with a thrust of your long sword directed at his eye. Another method is the “ceding parry” whereby you repel the enemy’s sword by thrusting in the direction of his right eye and following through as if to flick his neck. Third, as the enemy attacks, drive at his face with your left fist as you quickly close in. With this third parry, think of it as delivering a left-handed punch. Drill yourself thoroughly in these techniques.

(29)About “Stabbing the Face” (一、おもてをさすと云事)

When you engage the enemy, it is important to always think of piercing his face with your sword tip. If your mind is committed to stabbing his face, he will feel pressured and will be compelled to withdraw his head and body, causing opportunities to be revealed. Devise ways to master this method. Victory is yours if you have the presence of mind to slide into your opponent. Never forget the importance of what I call “stabbing the face.” Train hard to understand this technique.

(30)About “Stabbing the Chest” (一、心をさすと云事)

“Stabbing the chest” is to thrust at the enemy when there are obstacles overhead or at the sides or whenever it is problematic to strike. To avoid the enemy’s attack, turn the blade to reveal its back, then recover the tip without incline and counter with a direct stab to his chest. This technique is useful when you are tired or when your blade is dull and not cutting well. Learn how to apply this method.

(31)About “Katsu-Totsu” (一、かつとつと云事)

*Katsu-totsu*¹⁵ is used when forcing your opponent to retreat or when he tries to counter your attack. Bring your sword up from below as if to stab him. Then, immediately do the opposite by lowering the sword as if to strike him. The move is executed with a rapid rhythm of stabbing (*katsu*) then cutting (*totsu*). This cadence is encountered often in combat. The compound-riposte of *Katsu-totsu* is executed by raising your sword as if to thrust and then immediately lowering it as if to cut. Practice this cadence repeatedly.

(32)About the “Slapping Parry” (一、はりうけと云事)

The “slapping parry” is used when the exchange of techniques reaches an impasse with a repetitive clang-clang-clang rhythm. Parry the enemy’s attack by slapping the side of his blade, followed immediately with a counterattack. Do not put too much force in the slap and do not become distracted by your own parrying. Counter his attack by slapping and then striking in one continuous *stesso-tempo* movement. It is important to take the initiative in both the slapping parry and the following cut. If you capture the right cadence for the slap, your sword will remain true and steady regardless of how powerful the enemy’s strike may be. Study this technique well.

(33)About “Dealing to Many Enemies” (一、多敵のくらの事)

What I term “dealing to many enemies” is employed when engaging several adversaries at once. Draw your long and short swords and take a broad stance to the left and right as if to fling your foes to either side. Even if they assail you from four directions, push them back as one. Scrutinize the manner with which they attack and deal to them in the order of who comes first. Monitor the entire scenario and simultaneously cut with both swords to the left and right in riposte to their offensive. Pausing after you have struck is perilous. Assume the left and right stances without delay and rile the enemy by fiercely striking each one who is in range. Continuing the drive, cut each in his tracks with the intent of whittling them down.

Herd the enemy back into one place so that they can only attack in single file, like a line of fish strung together. As soon as they are bunched, seize the opportunity to cut through without stopping as you sweep them to each side. You will make little progress if you give them the opportunity to fall into compact groups. It is also perilous to rely on counter-attacking as this is essentially giving the initiative to the enemy. You will win by identifying the attacking rhythm of the enemy and by knowing where they will come undone. When you can, train against several partners at a time and practice forcing them back. When you understand this method, you will easily be able to deal with ten or twenty adversaries at once. Train hard and investigate ways to master this.

(34)About the “Principles of Engagement” (一、打あいの利の事)

In combat, it is through the “principles of engagement” that victory with the sword is attained. I need not explain the particulars. What is important is to practice conscientiously in order to realize what it takes to win. This is related to sword techniques that represent the true Way of combat strategy, the particulars of which are to be orally transmitted.

(35)About “One Strike” (一、一つの打と云事)

“One strike”¹⁶ is the surest way to victory. It cannot be understood without a solid grounding in strategy. Training diligently in “one strike” will lead to the embodiment of the combat mind and you will win in any fight. Training is the key.

(36)About “Direct Transmission” (一、直通のくらひと云事)

“Direct transmission” is what I convey to he who has mastered the true Way of the School of Two Swords as One. Temper your body so that it becomes [a weapon for] strategy. Study this well. Other details will be conveyed orally.

This scroll is a summary of the teachings of my school.

To beat people with swords in combat, you must first study the “five external forms” in conjunction with knowing the “five stances” and master the “pathway” of the sword. This way your body will move spontaneously and nimbly. Your mind will perceive the striking rhythms of combat, and the flow of your sword and techniques will be instinctively flawless as you have learned to move unrestrainedly with your body, feet and mind in unison. The principles of strategy will be realized when you defeat one foe or two, and you will come to understand what are strengths and weaknesses in combat. Analyze the content of this scroll article by article as you train and test yourself against various opponents. You will gradually become familiar with the principles of the Way. Be relentless in your study and be patient as you learn the virtue of all phenomena utilizing every opportunity to accumulate actual experience. Engage all and sundry and know their minds. Traverse the thousand-mile road one step at a time. Haste not in your training in the knowledge that this is the warrior’s calling. Seek victory today over the self of yesterday. Tomorrow, conquer your shortcomings and then [build] your strong points. Practice all I have written here, mindful of not veering from the path.

Even if you defeat the most daunting of adversaries, if your victories are not in accord with the principles contained within these scrolls, then they cannot be considered true to the Way. Embracing the principles of the Way, you can prevail over dozens of men. With the accretion of wisdom in sword work, you will master the art of combat for individual duels and large-scale strategy for battle.

One thousand days of training to forge, ten thousand days of training to refine. Be mindful of this.

12th Day of the 5th Month, Shōhō 2 (1645)
Shinmen Musashi Genshin
[To] Terao Magonojō

SCROLL 3

Fire

Ka-no-Maki

火の巻

Introduction

In the Nitō Ichi-ryū I consider battle in terms of fire. I will illuminate matters of strategy and the contest of arms in the Fire Scroll. First, many people think of the principles of strategy in the narrowest sense. Some seek to gain an advantage through subtle manipulation of the four to six inches from the fingertips to the wrist. Or they wave a fan about as they envisage how to win through use of their forearms. Others use bamboo swords and the like to teach how to strike more swiftly through honing agility in their hands and legs.¹ They emphasize gaining even the slightest increase in speed.

In exercising my ideas of strategy, I have put my life on the line many times in combat. I have learned the Way of the sword by risking everything in the divide between life and death. Accordingly, I know the strengths and weaknesses of an enemy's sword as he strikes and have learned how to use the edge and back of the blade [to parry and press]. It is illogical to dwell on small, weak techniques as you prepare yourself to slay an enemy. Small techniques are particularly inappropriate when you are suited in armor [for pitched battle]. It is also not practicable to amass one thousand or ten thousand men for your regular training. You must therefore engage in individual combat to work out the enemy's tactics, to know his strengths, weaknesses and methods, and then to be able to draw on your insights of strategy to beat all and sundry. In this manner you will become a master of the Way. Think to yourself "Who else but I can access the 'direct path'?" and "I will accomplish this in time," then throw yourself wholeheartedly into training in the ways of my school from morning to night. You will find liberation once you have mastered the skills and will naturally gain a sublime ability pertinent to all things. This is the necessary disposition of a warrior in the art of combat.

(1) About Assessing the Location (一、場の次第と云事)

There is such a thing as "bearing the sun" when assessing the place of combat; that is, to take your stance with the sun at your back. If this is not possible, endeavor to keep the sun to your right-hand side instead.² It is the same when inside a house. Be sure to have the light behind you or to your right if this is not possible. The area to your rear should be free of obstacles, as should the space on your left-hand side. Assume a stance that is restricted on the right.³ At night-time also, assume your stance with the same points in mind if your enemy is visible. Take a position with the fire to your rear or with the light to your right. Referred to as "looking down on the enemy," aim to stand at a slightly higher position than your opponent[s]. If inside a house, this means occupying the room's alcove.⁴

As the fight progresses, chase your foe back and try to force him to your left side so that his movement is constrained at the back. Whatever the case, it is vital that you drive him into a tight spot. Continue forcing the enemy back unrelentingly so that he does not have time to turn his head and see the precariousness of his position. Inside a house, browbeat the enemy in the same way so that he is impervious to the approaching narrow spaces, such as thresholds, lintels, shutters, sliding doors, edges and the like. Pushing him back into these obstacles or pillars is the same—he is not to be given respite to grasp his predicament. In all cases, the enemy is grasp into places with bad footing or with barriers to the sides. At all times make use of the location's features and, above all, seek to "win the place." Study this strategy well and train diligently.

(2) About the "Three Initiatives" (一、三つの先と云事)

Of the three initiatives, the first is to initiate the attack before the enemy does. This is called *ken-no-sen*.⁵ The second initiative is to attack the enemy after he initiates first. This is called *tai-no-sen*.⁶ The third initiative is to attack the enemy as he attacks you. This is called *tai-tai-no-sen*.⁷ These are the three initiatives.⁸ Regardless of the method of combat, once a fight is underway there are no other initiatives other than these three. Taking the initiative is the key to quick victory and is thus the most crucial aspect of

combat strategy. There are many specifics regarding taking the initiative, but it is not necessary to record them in detail here. Victory is only gained through the combat wisdom you possess, taking the appropriate initiative for each situation and having insight into your enemy's mind.⁹

1. “Ken-no-Sen”—Crackdown Initiative

When you want to attack, keep composed at the start and then suddenly seize the initiative. Take the initiative in an attack with a mind that is fast and furious on the surface but tranquil within. Or advance confidently with a strong spirit and faster footwork than usual and seize the initiative to quickly assail the enemy when you are near him. Another way is to free your mind with the sole intention of routing the enemy from start to finish and win with a spirit brimming with energy. These are all examples of the *ken-no-sen* initiative—cracking down on the enemy before he can hit back.

2. “Tai-no-Sen”—Cleanup Initiative

The second is the “cleanup initiative.” As the enemy is about to attack, keep perfectly composed as you present him with a [feigned] sign of weakness. Just as he gets in close, move back resolutely showing that you are about to pounce, and strike him straight and strong as he waivers. This is one way of taking the initiative. Another way is repel him with superior intensity when he moves in to attack. He will then change the cadence of his assault. Capture the instant his rhythm changes and secure victory. These are examples of the *tai-no-sen* initiative—cleaning up after he initiates.

3. “Tai-Tai-no-Sen”—Coinciding Initiative

The third is the “coinciding initiative.” As the enemy moves in quickly to attack, face him with composure and confidence. As he approaches, suddenly redouble the drive of your attack and strike him mightily, snatching victory while he is still plodding. If the enemy advances calmly, be light on your feet and confront him in haste. When he gets in close, finish him off with a powerful strike in consonance with his recoil as you jostle with each other. These are examples of the *tai-tai-no-sen* initiative—coinciding with his attack.

It is difficult to write about such matters in detail. Read what I have outlined here and find ways to work it out for yourself. These three initiatives must be employed in line with to the right time and principles. Although you will not always be the first to attack, seize the initiative to control your opponent's movement.¹⁰ Whatever the case, train diligently to forge a spirit that seeks victory through the application of strategic wisdom.

(3) About “Stopping the Start” (一、枕をおさゆると云事)

“Stopping the start”¹¹ involves not allowing the enemy's head to rise. In the Way of combat is it perilous to go on the defensive in a bout by allowing yourself to be manipulated. Whatever it takes, you must be the one who dominates. It stands to reason that both you and the enemy are of the same mind, so taking the initiative and leading him will be difficult unless you can read his intentions. Blocking his attack, deflecting his thrusts and breaking free of his grip means that you are on the back foot in terms of combat strategy.

Through mastery of the correct Way, “stopping the start” involves anticipating your opponent's movements in a fight, knowing what he will do before he knows himself. Stop his strike at the “S...” and do not allow him to continue. This is the mindset of “stopping the start.” As he attacks, stop him at the “A....” When he leaps back, stop him at the “L....” When he cuts, nip it in the bud at the “C....” It is all done with the same mind.

Even when the enemy attacks you with some technique, allow futile ones to pass but prevent any that you feel are genuine by not allowing execution. This is foremost in combat. That said, aiming to suppress and thwart your opponent's attempts is akin to losing the initiative. First, any techniques that you employ must be in accordance with the Way.¹² Stifling the enemy's technique at the start just as he contemplates striking, and taking control without giving him a chance to succeed, is the hallmark of a master of strategy, a level attained only through rigorous training. Examine thoroughly the principle of “stopping the start.”

(4) About “Traversing Critical Points” (一、とをこすと云事)

In the context of navigating the ocean, “traversing critical points” entails negotiating difficult currents. There may be treacherous straits as long as forty of fifty leagues to be crossed, and this is what is meant by “critical points.” Traversing problematic positions is also necessary at many junctures during a man's life. With sea routes, you must know the hazardous places that need crossing, know the condition of your vessel and know well the lucky or unlucky omens of each day.¹³ Without an accompanying vessel, you must be aware of your position and ride the crosswinds or catch the tailwind. Be prepared for wind changes and to row two or three leagues to port if required. This is how one traverses perilous passages at sea. This mindset relates to overcoming problematic points in life and should be applied with due concern to the demands of the situation.

In swordsmanship and in the midst of pitched battle, the ability to know the right moment to traverse a critical point is essential. Know the enemy's strengths and have a firm grasp of your own capabilities. Traverse the peril at the optimum point just as a worthy mariner navigates ocean routes. Once crossed, the mind becomes tranquil. If you successfully get past the critical point, your opponent will tire, the initiative will be yours and victory is there for the taking. The mind of “traversing critical points” is essential in large-scale strategy as well as individual combat. This must be examined carefully.

(5) About “Knowing the Conditions” (一、けいきを知ると云事)

“Knowing the conditions” in large-scale battle strategy is to detect if the enemy is flourishing or failing, cognizant of their numbers and intent, taking their location into consideration and carefully scrutinizing the enemy's fettle. With this information at

your disposal, direct your own men in accordance with the principles of strategy and claim certain victory through exploiting the initiative.

When engaged in individual combat also, bear in mind the enemy's school and ascertain his strengths and weaknesses. It is important to take the initiative and take advantage of the enemy's state by distinguishing fluctuations and pinpointing the intervals in his rhythm. With superior insight, you will always be able to see the condition of things. When you can move freely in combat, you will see into the enemy's mind and find many ways to win. Use your ingenuity.

(6) About "Trampling the Sword" (一、けんをふむと云事)

"Trampling the sword" is exclusive to combat.

In the case of large-scale strategy, the enemy will start by shooting their bows or harquebuses. It will be difficult to penetrate the enemy line if you attack after they release a volley of arrows and bullets as they will have time to re-draw their arrows and load powder in their barrels. The best way to deal with bows and harquebuses is to storm the enemy as they shoot. By attacking quickly, the enemy will not have time to nock their bows or reload their harquebuses. React rationally to whatever the enemy throws at you and prevail by trampling their maneuvers underfoot.

In the case of man-to-man combat, if you strike after each blow by the opponent, the engagement will become *quid pro quo*. If you trample his sword underfoot, he will be defeated on the first attack and will not have an opportunity to make a second. Trampling should not be limited to the feet. The body is used to trample, the spirit is used to trample and, of course, the sword is used to trample. No respite should be given so that the enemy has no chance to make a second move. This is precisely how you take the initiative in any situation. Move in synchronization with the enemy, not with the intent of colliding with him, but to finish him after the encounter. Be sure to explore this teaching carefully.

(7) About "Recognizing Collapse" (一、くづれを知ると云事)

All things are prone to collapse. Houses collapse, the body collapses and enemies collapse when their time is up. Cadences can become confused and collapse. In large-scale strategy, the enemy must be pursued relentlessly as soon as you sense cracks in their cadence. Allowing the enemy to breathe by not capitalizing on this moment of collapse will give them a chance to recover.

When fighting a single opponent, he may start to collapse when his rhythm becomes muddled. He will bounce back if you are not vigilant and you will make no progress. Just as he is on the verge of collapse, immediately rush at him and attack relentlessly so that he cannot even look up. Charge straight at him with single-minded resolve. Beat him to a pulp so that he has no chance to reorganize. Learn the gravity of smashing the enemy to pieces. If he is not pulverized, his spirit will remain. Examine this well.

(8) About "Becoming your Enemy" (一、敵になると云事)

"Becoming your enemy" is to put yourself in his place. Think of a burglar who is holed up in a house he is attempting to rob. We are prone to overestimating the enemy's strengths. By putting yourself in his position, however, you realize that he must feel that the whole world is against him. With no way out, he is like a pheasant in a cage. The assailant zooming in to kill him is a falcon. Consider this carefully.

Even in large-scale strategy, there is a tendency to think that the enemy force is strong. This leads to a cautious approach. There is little that should concern you if you command plenty of good men and understand the principles of strategy for defeating the enemy. You must also "become your enemy" in individual combat. Defeat comes ahead of the engagement through believing one's foe is a skilled adherent of the Way who exemplifies the principles of strategy. Reflect on this.

(9) About "Releasing the Four Hands" (一、四手をはなすと云事)

"Releasing the four hands"¹⁴ is a tactic used when you and your opponent are competing with the same mind and have reached an impasse. If you sense that you are battling with the same mind, discard your current methods and employ alternative ones to seize victory.

In the case of large-scale combat, if you engage with the intention of [keeping] "four hands" in play, you will not make progress and your allies will suffer heavy losses. Be ready to change your approach instantly and execute an unexpected tactic to outfox the enemy.

This is true for individual combat, too. If you suspect you are fighting in a "four hands" stalemate, gauge your enemy's frame of mind and win by changing tack and cutting a completely different line of attack. Consider this carefully.

(10) About "Shifting the Shadow" (一、かげをうごかすと云事)

"Shifting the shadow"¹⁵ is applied when you are unable to fathom the enemy's mind. With large-scale strategy, when you cannot ascertain the enemy's situation, feign the start of an all-out assault. Then their state will become obvious and it will be easy to rout them with the right approach when their tactics have been exposed.

In the case of individual combat, if your opponent assumes a rear or side posture to conceal his intentions, his mind will be revealed through the movement of his sword if you lure him with a feint. Thus, with objective divulged you can snatch victory by utilizing the right approach. You will miss the right rhythm if you are haphazard. Study this thoroughly.

(11) About "Arresting the Shadow" (一、かげをおさゆると云事)

"Arresting the shadow" is a tactic used when you perceive that the enemy is getting ready to attack.

In large-scale strategy, the moment you recognize that the enemy is about to act, you suppress them. If you convincingly demonstrate your intent to completely stifle their assault, the enemy, being constricted, will quickly have a change of heart. You

can then alter your approach to seize the initiative and defeat the enemy at will with a clear mind.

In individual combat, upon sensing the enemy's determination to attack, immediately snuff out his drive with an appropriate rhythm. Catch the beat of his retreat. Taking the initiative, defeat him when you sense the right moment. Research this carefully.

(12) About "Infecting" (一、うつらかすと云事)

All things can be infectious. Drowsiness is infectious, as is yawning. Even time is communicable. In large-scale strategy, if you sense that the enemy is agitated and hesitant, pretend not to notice and take your time. Seeing this reaction, the enemy will drop their guard. With your mind set free, attack mercilessly the instant the enemy has been infected by your inaction.

With individual combat, loosen your body and spirit and, as your opponent inadvertently follows suit, seize the initiative to attack powerfully and quickly. There is a similar tactic, "making the enemy drunk." You contaminate his mind by exhibiting listlessness, hesitancy or weakness. Be sure to explore this strategy thoroughly.

(13) About "Eliciting Agitation" (一、むかつかすると云事)

There are many ways in which one can become agitated, such as being within an inch of danger. A second way is when faced with an impossible task. The third way is through surprise. Study this.

In large-scale strategy, it is important to know how to evoke irritation in the enemy. By suddenly assaulting with vim and vigor when they least expect it, and not giving them a chance to recoup, you can seize the initiative and finish them off in their moment of indecision.

For individual combat, trick the enemy by moving slowly at first and then suddenly attack him with force. It is imperative to not let up, crushing him according to the movement of his body and the fluctuations of his mind. Learn this method well.

(14) About "Invoking Fear" (一、おびやかすと云事)

Many things can invoke fear. Fear is aroused when the unexpected happens.

With large-scale strategy, fear can be conjured in the enemy not only by what they see. Fear can be incited by bellowing, making something small seem greater in size, or by unexpectedly assaulting their flank. Victory is gained by taking advantage of the enemy's muddled cadence prompted by a moment of terror.

In the case of individual combat, it is important to beat your opponent by doing something unexpected with your body, sword or voice to startle him. Study this well.

(15) About "Blending" (一、まぶると云事)

When you clash with the advancing enemy and an impasse has been reached, this is the time to become one with him through "blending." From within the tussle you must find an opportunity to win.

In both large- and small-scale strategy, when the engagement languishes because both are fighting with equal force, blend with the enemy so that it is impossible to make a distinction. From there you can find an opening and to seize victory, winning strongly. Study this tactic in detail.

(16) About "Hitting the Corners" (一、かどにさわると云事)

Pushing through unyielding objects from the front can be an impossible task. In such cases, the tactic of "hitting the corners" is effective. With large-scale strategy, look at the number of opponents before you assault a corner—a protruding area—of their force. If a corner can be reduced, this will affect the entire unit. As one corner is weakened, it is important to then attack other corners in the same way and seize control. In individual combat, even inflicting minor damage on corners of the enemy's body will make him crumble and will lead to victory. Study this carefully and understand the principles needed to win.

(17) About "Causing Confusion" (一、うろめかすと云事)

To "cause confusion" is to make the enemy lose heart.

In large-scale strategy, calculate what is going through the enemy's mind on the battlefield and use your strategic prowess to cause confusion among the opposing troops by making them question "Here or there? This or that? Slowly or quickly?" The enemy is left vulnerable when their rhythm is in disarray.

In individual combat, disorient the opponent by employing various techniques to attack according to the circumstances. You can feign a thrust or strike or get in close. You can easily pick him off once you have identified the confusion infecting his mind. This is indispensable in combat, so study it well.

(18) About "The Three Cries" (一、三つの声と云事)

The "three cries" bellowed before, during and after an encounter are distinctive. The method of shouting depends on the situation. A cry is a vocalization of one's life force. We roar against fires, the wind and the waves. The cry reveals the degree of someone's vitality.

In large-scale strategy, we roar at the enemy with all our might at the commencement of battle. Vocalizations lower in pitch are emitted from the bottom of the gut in the midst of combat. Then we bellow with gusto in victory. These are what are referred to as the "three cries."

In individual combat, yell *Ei!* while feigning an attack to lure the opponent into making a move, and then follow up with a blow from your sword. Roar to pronounce victory after the enemy has been felled. These are known as the "before-after cries."

Do not cry out loudly as you strike with your sword. If you emit a cry during the attack, it should be low in tone and match your cadence. Study this well.

(19)About “Mixing In” (一、まぎると云事)

What I call “mixing in” is when two armies clash in pitched battle is striking at one of the enemy’s strong points. When that point begins to yield, divert the brunt of your attack to another strong point in the enemy force. It is basically alternating the target of your assaults as if zigzagging down a slope.

This is an important tactic when fighting alone against several opponents. Do not try to defeat each side. When the enemy is pushed back in one direction, turn and attack the strongest opponent on the opposite side. Sensing the cadence of your opponents, move as if zigzagging your way down a path from left to right according to their reaction in a rhythm that suits you. After determining the condition of your enemies, disappear among them and strike with no intention whatsoever of pulling back. You will then see countless opportunities to win. This is also valid for getting in close to a strong opponent in individual combat. To mix in, you must be of the mind to not retreating even one step. You must learn what “mixing in” while advancing entails.

(20)About “Crushing” (一、ひしぐと云事)

To “crush” is to see your opponent as weak and yourself as strong and smashing him to bits.

In large-scale strategy, irrespective of their number, the enemy will show their vulnerability if they hesitate or are disoriented. At this point, crush the enemy from the top down. Overwhelm them with a burst of energy as if to push them back and obliterate them. If the crushing blows are insufficient, the enemy may recover. Crush them as if they were in the palm of your hand. Study this well.

In the case of individual combat, if your adversary is not skilled or he backs off because his rhythm is disrupted, he must be crushed immediately and given no chance to breathe or look you in the eye. It is crucial that he is not afforded the slightest opportunity to get back on his feet. Learn this well.

(21)About “The Mountain-Sea Alternation” (一、さんかいのかわりと云事)

The mind of “mountain-sea”¹⁶ means that it is perilous to execute the same move repeatedly in a fight. It may be unavoidable to employ a tactic twice but never do it three times. If an attack is unsuccessful, keep applying pressure and try again. If it still has no effect, quickly adapt and change your approach. If your next move doesn’t work, then try another. The mindset underlying this is when the enemy is thinking of “mountain,” attack him as the “sea.” If he is thinking “sea,” take him down as the “mountain.” This is the Way of strategy. Study it exhaustively.

(22)About “Knocking the Bottom Out” (一、そこをぬくと云事)

What I call “knocking the bottom out” is as follows. You may feel you have succeeded through application of the principles of the Way in battle when, in fact, in his heart the enemy has not yet yielded. On the surface that he is defeated but deep down his spirit is still very much in the fight. When this occurs, replenish your mind and raze the enemy’s spirit by ripping it apart so that he is defeated beyond doubt. Take care to confirm this.

“Knocking the bottom out” [of his fighting spirit] can be accomplished by the use of a sword, with the body or with your mind. There is not only one way to achieve this. Once the stuffing has been knocked out of the enemy, there is no need to keep fixed on him. If this is not the case, continue to maintain vigilance. It is difficult to destroy an enemy who still harbors a residual spirit to fight. You must study diligently to understand the meaning of “Knocking the Bottom Out” for both large- and small-scale strategy.

(23)About “Starting Anew” (一、あらたになると云事)

“Starting anew” is a tactic used when you and your opponent are tangled in a deadlock. In such a case, you must rid yourself of prior feelings and start afresh as if doing everything for the first time. This way, you can employ a new cadence and snatch victory. “Starting anew” in a gridlock where you are unable to take the initiative requires an instant change of mind and the execution of an entirely different maneuver to win.

The tactic of “starting anew” is also crucial in large-scale strategy. You will come to see it quickly with knowledge in strategy. Study it well.

(24)About “Rat’s Head, Ox’s Neck” (一、そとうごしゅと云事)

In “rat’s head, ox’s neck,”¹⁷ when you and the enemy have become fixated on particulars in the engagement, think of the Way of strategy as being both a rat’s head and an ox’s neck. When you are fighting with subtleties, suddenly expand your mind and transform into something big. Transitioning between large and small is essential in strategy. It is important for a warrior to have as his standard mindset a “rat’s head, ox’s neck.” This is crucial in both large- and small-scale strategy and should be examined carefully.

(25)About “The General Knows His Troops” (一、しやうそつをしると云事)

“The general knows his troops” is pertinent in all forms of combat. In this Way, if you study relentlessly to build strategic wisdom, you will come to think of the enemy troops as your own and be able to command them to move as you see fit. You will be able to direct at will. You are the general and the enemy are your men. Be sure to master this strategy.

(26) About “Releasing the Hilt” (一、つかをはなすと云事)

“Releasing the hilt” has several implications. It can mean the mind of winning without a sword or the mind of not winning with a sword.¹⁸ The various approaches that stem from this mind cannot be written in detail here. Train persistently.

(27) About “The Body of a Boulder” (一、いわをのみと云事)

One who has mastered the Way of combat strategy can instantaneously become like a boulder. Nothing can touch him and he will be immovable. Details conveyed orally.

I have long pondered the articles logged here about my school of swordsmanship. This is the first time I have put them in writing. As such, I fear that the order is somewhat jumbled and some principles have not been expressed in sufficient detail. Even so, what I have recorded will serve as markers for those dedicated to pursuing this Way.

Since I was a young man, I have devoted my life to studying the Way of combat strategy. I have toughened my body and finessed my skills of sword work, with my knowledge evolving over several stages. I have ventured forth to observe the methods of other schools. Some explain lofty theories while others are concerned with the execution of intricate techniques. Although they exude an air of skillful beauty, they are devoid of the true spirit of strategy. It is possible to garner technical artistry and hone the mind in these arts. Alas, however, training in these disciplines leads to bad habits that block progress in the true path. Once habits are formed, they stick and are almost impossible to remedy. The Way of strategy in its truest manifestation falls into decay and is lost. The principles behind the mastery of swordsmanship and winning in combat are one in the same. If you learn my teachings of strategy and abide by its rules, you need never doubt that victory will be yours.

SCROLL 4

Wind

Fū-no-Maki

風の巻

Introduction

Mastering combat strategy requires studying the Ways of other schools. In the Wind Scroll¹ I outline various traditions of strategy and explain their characteristics. It is difficult to fully comprehend the Way of my school without understanding the other disciplines.

Upon researching other schools, I found some center on executing powerful techniques with extra-long swords. Other schools focus on the use of short swords called *kodachi*. Or they create myriad forms for sword work, conveying the various stances as “exterior” and the Way as “interior” teachings. In this scroll I will show how such schools have veered from the true path of strategy. I will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches and elucidate the principles.

The principles of my school are in a class of their own. Other schools extol the virtues of their colorful, flowery techniques like produce peddled to make a living. Is this not a deviation from the true Way?² Are not the so-called “strategists” in the world today limiting their training to sword work believing that victory can be had simply through agility and subtle skills for wielding the sword? In either case, this is not the correct Way. I will now list the shortcomings of other schools. Study these well so that you may grasp the logic behind Nitō Ichi-ryū.

(1) Schools Employing Extra-Long Swords (一、他流に大きな太刀を持事)

Some schools prefer to employ extra-long swords. From my perspective, however, these are weak schools. The reason is because they clearly fail to comprehend the principle of winning in any circumstance and think that an extra-long sword will be advantageous for striking the enemy from afar. That is [the only reason] why they prefer a longer sword.

It is said that “even an extra inch gives the upper hand.” However, this is a meaningless teaching advocated by those ignorant of combat strategy. With no understanding of the [deeper] principles of strategy, they seek to win from a safer distance with a longer weapon. This is indicative of a weak mind and is why I see that their strategies as being feeble.

If an adherent of such a school were to engage at close quarters with the enemy, the longer the sword, the harder it is to strike with. It cannot be wielded freely and will become burdensome. He will find himself disadvantaged against an enemy employing a short sword or one fighting with his bare hands. Those who prefer extra-long swords no doubt have their reasons but they have no validity when viewed from the perspective of worldly truth. Will a short sword always lose against a long sword? When forced to fight where space is restricted in height and breadth, or when you are in a place where only a short sword is permitted,³ preference for a long sword will be your undoing as it a copout in strategic ability. Moreover, some people lack strength and are not built to wield an extra-long sword. Since ancient times it has been said that “long and short are combined.” Therefore, I am not opposed to long swords per se. I do, however, dislike the bias for using longer swords.

In large-scale strategy, the presence of numerous troops is linked with an extra-long sword. Smaller numbers are consistent with the use of a short one. Is it not viable for a small number of troops to take the fight to a larger force? The virtue of strategy is precisely that smaller numbers can triumph [if guided correctly]. From the earliest days, there are many examples of small forces crushing big armies. In our school, this kind of narrow-minded preconception is to be rejected above all else. Research this well.

(2) About Schools That Use Swords with Force (一、他流におりてつよみの太刀と云事)

One should not consider a sword [stroke] in terms of being strong or weak. The cut will be coarse if the sword is brandished with too much brute force. Such an uneven technique will make victory difficult. You will not succeed in cutting through human flesh and bone if you think only of striking with brute force. It is also bad to use too much power when testing the cutting power of a blade (*tameshi-giri*).⁴ When punishing some mortal foe, nobody thinks of cutting feebly or brutishly. “Cutting to kill” it is not achieved with a mind to do it strongly, and certainly not weakly. It is achieved with just enough power to ensure death. Your own sword could break into pieces by hitting the enemy’s sword with excess strength. Consequently, it is senseless to strike with excessive force.

In large-scale strategy, relying on force of numbers to rout the enemy will lead to him countering with equal force. Both sides will be the same. Winning at anything is unachievable if correct principles are ignored. Thus, the underlying principle of my school is to defeat the enemy in any situation by applying strategic wisdom, without incorporating anything that is “excessive.”⁵ This must be researched attentively.

(3) Schools That Use Short Swords (一、他流に短き太刀を用る事)

Some warriors try to win using only short swords but this is at variance with the true Way. Since antiquity, swords were called *tachi* and *katana*, proving that distinctions have long been made between short and longer lengths.⁶ Warriors of superior strength can brandish a long sword as if it were light and thus there is no reason for them to prefer a shorter sword. They are, in fact, capable of wielding even longer weapons, such as *yari* (pikes) and *naginata* (glaives). With shorter swords, it is ill advised to look for openings as the enemy swings his blade and closing the distance to grab him. Aiming for an opening as the opponent attacks gives the impression of relinquishing the initiative and should be avoided as your swords will become entangled. Moreover, using a shorter sword and jumping in to close the distance or grab the enemy is futile when faced with several opponents. Warriors who have learned to use the short sword try to dispatch several of the enemy with sweeping cuts, jumping in and spinning around. They will end up defending themselves and falling into disarray as this is not in line with the principles of strategy. Ideally, the way to win with certainty is to drive the enemy flustering them as they dash here and there while you remain upright and strong.

This principle also applies to large-scale strategy. At the core of strategy is subjugate the enemy and precipitously push them back.

If you are accustomed to blocking, evading, disengaging or deflecting attacks in the course of your training, it will become ingrained and you will be inadvertently influenced by the enemy’s ploys. The Way of combat strategy is direct and true, and it is vital to employ correct principles when assailing the enemy so that he is the one who succumbs to you. Study this well.

(4) About Schools With Many Techniques (一、他流に太刀数多き事)

Teaching myriad sword techniques is essentially exploiting the Way as a commercial venture. By bamboozling novices with countless moves, teachers make them believe that their training method is profound. This approach in strategy should be rejected.

Thinking there are assorted ways to strike a man with a sword is indicative of a confused mind. There are not so many ways to cut in the world. Irrespective of whether the swordsman is a master, a novice, a woman or a child, approaches for striking or cutting are limited. The only other techniques [apart from cutting] are to stab or slash. There cannot be multiple variations if the point is simply to cut.

Nevertheless, depending on the place and according to the conditions, you will be unable to wield your sword if stuck in a position that is restricted above and to the sides. This is why I have five ways for holding the sword [so that any situation can be dealt with rationally]. It does not comply with the true Way to cut by twisting the wrists, swiveling the body, leaping or circling. A twisting cut, swiveling cut, leaping cut or skirting cut will never cut. These movements are totally ineffectual.

In my strategy, the body and mind are kept straight while the opponent is made to twist and bend. It is important to defeat him just as his mind becomes distorted. Be sure to research this well.

(5) Schools That Emphasize Sword Stances (一、他流に太刀の構を用る事)

It is a mistake attaching too much importance to sword stances. That there are [so many] stances [emphasized] in the world of sword strategy implies that there are no enemies to fight.⁷ To be more explicit, inventing new laws from old customs to suit current rules should not happen in the Way of combat strategy. Simply coerce the enemy into a compromised position as each situation allows. Assuming a fighting stance means adopting a posture that is immovable and resolute [both in body and mind]. Like building a castle or positioning one's troops, be prepared to withstand any assault with an impenetrable mind. This is fundamental. In the Way of combat strategy, one must strive to take the initiative at all times. To [carelessly] assume a stance is a declaration of your intention to wait for the opponent to move. Consider this with caution. In the Way of combat strategy, it is mandatory to unsettle the enemy's stance, assail him in ways he least expects, make him panic,⁸ irritate him, intimidate him and triumph by capitalizing on his confused cadence. I am thus averse to stances if it means relinquishing the initiative. That is why I teach the *ukō-mukō* or "stance [of] no-stance" in my school.⁹

In large-scale strategy, you must know the numbers and strength of the enemy, take into consideration the lay of the battlefield and be aware of your own numbers and ability. It is essential in war to position your troops in the most favorable site before the battle begins. It is twice as advantageous to take the initiative and attack first rather than wait for the enemy to do so. Assuming an unflinching sword stance to parry an attack is effectively the same as constructing a [protective] fence of pikes and glaives. When you strike the enemy, pull the "fence posts" out and use them as pikes and glaives. Study this carefully.

(6) About "Fixing the Gaze" in Other Schools (一、他流に目付と云事)

Certain schools maintain that the gaze should be fixed on the enemy's sword. Others teach students to focus on the hands, the face, the enemy's feet and so on. Setting your gaze on specific points will cause uncertainty and will adversely affect your strategy. To give another example, players of *kemari*¹⁰ do not focus intently on the ball as they kick it. They can still deflect the ball off their temple and kick it using the *bansuri* technique¹¹ or keep it afloat with an *oimari* kick,¹² or even a spin kick. As the player becomes more accomplished, he can kick the ball without needing to look at it. The same can be said of acrobats. Someone accustomed to this art can juggle several swords while simultaneously balancing a door on the tip of his nose. He has no need to fix his gaze as he can see what he is doing intuitively through lots of training. Likewise, in the Way of combat strategy, the warrior learns through engaging with different opponents to determine the weight of an enemy's mind. With practice in the Way, you will come to see everything, from reach to the speed of the sword. Generally speaking, "fixing the gaze" in strategy is to attach it to an enemy's mind.

In large-scale strategy, also, the state and numbers of the enemy must be scrutinized. The two approaches for observing are the eyes of *kan* ("looking in") and *ken* ("looking at"). Intensifying the *kan* gaze, penetrate the enemy's mind to discern the conditions. With a widened gaze, examine how the battle is progressing and search for moments of strength and vulnerability. This is the surest way to victory. In both large- and small-scale strategy, refrain from fixing your gaze narrowly. As I have written previously, focusing on minute details will make you forget bigger issues. Your mind will become confused and certain victory will slip from your reach. You must study this principle through meticulous training.

(7) About Footwork in Other Schools (一、他流に足づかひ有事)

There are several types of footwork employed in other schools, such as "floating foot,"¹³ "jumping foot," "hopping foot," "trampling foot" and "crow's foot."¹⁴ These are all deficient from the perspective of my school of strategy. The reason why "floating foot" is to be avoided is because your feet will try to hover in combat when you should, in fact, always move with your feet firmly planted on the ground. "Jumping foot" should also be avoided because there is always a preparatory movement at the start and a sense of finality when you land. "Jumping foot" is worthless as there is no need to leap around continually in battle. "hopping foot" causes the mind to "bounce" as well as the feet and you will be unable to advance. "Stomping foot" is particularly unacceptable as the feet are planted with an attitude of waiting. Then there are the supple methods for maneuvering, such as "crow's foot." Sword fights take place in all kinds of environment: swamps, boggy ground, mountains, rivers, stony fields or narrow pathways. Depending on the location, it may be impractical to leap around or move nimbly.

In our school, nothing about the feet changes. It is no different from routinely walking down a road. In accordance with the enemy's cadence, when hurrying, do so with an unhurried bearing without moving too little or too much, ensuring that your steps do not become inconsistent.

Movement is also critical in large-scale strategy. If you attack the enemy hastily without judging their intentions, your cadence will become chaotic and it will be difficult to succeed. Conversely, delaying too much will lead to missing the chance to strike and finish the encounter quickly as your enemy falters and starts to crumble. Strike the instant you detect disarray, not giving the enemy any mercy or chances to regroup. This is how victory is attained. Train hard in this.

(8) The Use of Speed in Other Schools (一、他の兵法にはやきを用る事)

Speed in combat is irrelevant in the real Way. In all things, what is referred to as “fast” means that the intervals are out of sync with the rhythm. This is what is meant when things are said to be fast or slow. The movements of a master in some discipline will not appear to be fast. For example, there are messengers capable of covering 40–50 leagues [120–150 miles] in a day but they are not running at full pace from morning to night. Tenderfoot runners will never cover such a long distance even if they run all day. In the Way of dance,¹⁵ a novice accompanying a skilled singer in the recital of a song will become harried as he struggles not to fall behind. In the same way, a novice playing the drum in the placid melody of the “Oimatsu” play¹⁶ will feel like he is lagging and will try to catch up in a hurry. The tempo for “Takasago”¹⁷ is faster, but it is incorrect to play it hastily. He who hurries falls down and will end up being too slow. Slowness is also not good. Those who are highly accomplished may seem slow but they never lose their timing. Whatever the case, a skilled practitioner never appears to be rushed.

These examples should help you to understand the principles of the Way. Going too fast is particularly bad in the Way of combat. Depending on the location, be it marshland, swampy terrain or the like, it may be impossible to maneuver the body and legs speedily. With the sword as well, do not cut too quickly. Not being like a [*tessen* iron] fan¹⁸ or a knife, if you try to cut quickly with a sword, the speed will prevent it from cutting. Consider this point carefully.

In the case of large-scale strategy as well, the thought of rushing things is hazardous. So long as you employ the mindset of “stopping the start,” then you will never be too slow. You must take the opposite approach in situations when somebody is moving with great speed. It is important to keep calm without being unduly influenced [by your opponent]. Be sure to train hard and work out the meaning of this.

(9) About “Interior” and “Exterior” Teachings in Other Schools (一、他流に奥表と云事)

In combat, what are “exterior” and “interior” teachings? Depending on the art, terms such as “ultimate teaching” are used along with “interior” or “exterior.” As for the principles of combatting an enemy with a sword, there is no such thing as fighting with exterior techniques and cutting with interior teachings.

In teaching my method of combat, those new to the Way are first taught techniques that are easy to do and principles that are easy to grasp. Later, I impart deeper, more diverse principles that students can pick up naturally as they progress down the path. Whatever the case, experience [of actual combat] is the only way to remember the teachings, so there is no distinction between “interior” and “exterior.”

As it is said, “Venturing into the depths of the mountain, deciding to go even further in, one will emerge once again at an entrance.” Regardless of the Way, sometimes the “interior” is better and sometimes it is better to show the exterior. With the principles of combat, who can say what should be hidden and what should be revealed? This is why I dislike asking students to submit written pledges of secrecy under the threat of punishment when I teach them my Way. Instead, I gauge the students’ capability and teach the correct Way, encouraging them to discard bad habits from the five or six realms of strategy.¹⁹ The student is taught how to enter into the true path of warrior principles and to liberate his mind from the shackles of doubt. This is the Way of teaching in my school. This requires considerable training.

Hitherto in the Wind Scroll, I recorded in concise terms the strategy of other schools in nine articles. I could follow with more detailed accounts exposing gateways to interior teachings of each of these schools. I have refrained, however, from naming schools and their technical labels as explanations for such and such a way varies from person to person and their interpretation of the principles. As such, even within the same school, adherents will have a slightly different interpretation of their methods. I did not identify the schools or techniques because they are sure to change with time.

I have summarized the conventional traits of various schools in these nine points. From a broad perspective and from the standpoint of proper reasoning, clearly these schools are biased with their preference for either longer weapons, or by asserting the advantages of short swords, or their obsession with strength and weakness, coarseness and refinement. As these schools all represent biased Ways, there is no need to explicitly state the “gateway” or “inner sanctions” as everybody knows what they are. In my school, there is no such thing as “interior” or “gateway” for sword work.²⁰ There are no set fighting stances per se. It is simply to learn the virtues with all one’s heart. This is of the essence in strategy.

12th Day of the 5th Month, Shōhō 2 (1645)
Shinmen Musashi Genshin
[To] Terao Magonojō

SCROLL 5

Void/Ether

Kū-no-Maki

空の巻

Introduction

The Way of combat in Nitō Ichi-ryū is made clear in the Ether Scroll.¹ The Ether is a place where there is nothing. I consider this emptiness as something which cannot be known. Of course, Ether is also nothing. Knowing what does exist, one can then know what does not. This is what I mean by “Ether.” People tend to mistake this notion of Ether as something that cannot be distinguished but this is not the true Ether. It is simply confusion in everybody’s minds. So too in the Way of combat strategy, ignorance of the laws of the samurai by those who practice the Way of the warrior is not represented as emptiness. Likewise, those who harbor various doubts explain it as “emptiness,” but this is not the true meaning of Ether.

The warrior must scrupulously learn by heart the Way of combat strategy and thoroughly study other martial arts without forgoing any aspect related to the practice of the warrior’s Way. He must seek to put the Way into practice each hour of every day without tiring or losing focus. He must polish the two layers of his mind, the “heart of perception” and the “heart of intent,” and sharpen his two powers of observation, the gazes of *kan* (“looking in”) and *ken* (“looking at”). He must recognize that the true Ether is where all the clouds of confusion have completely lifted, leaving not a hint of haziness.

When you are impervious to the true Way, faithfully following your own instead thinking all is well, be it Buddhist Law or secular law, you will stray further from the truth. When the spirit is uncurled and compared with overarching universal principles, it becomes evident that a prejudiced mind and a distorted view of things have led to a departure from the proper path. Know this mind and use what is straight as your foundation. Make the sincere heart your Way as you practice strategy in its broadest sense, correctly and lucidly. Ponder the Ether as you study the Way. As you practice the Way, the Ether will open before you.

There is Good, not Evil in the Ether

There is Wisdom

There is Reason

There is the Way

The Mind, Empty

12th Day of the 5th Month, Shōhō 2 (1645)

Shinmen Musashi Genshin

[To] Terao Magonojō

THE 5-DIRECTION SWORD PATHWAYS

GOHŌ-NO-TACHIMICHI

五方之太刀道

Combat strategy (*heihō*) is a Way. Therefore, attaining the principles [for victory] when crossing swords with the enemy is also applicable on the field [of battle] of the “Three Armies.”¹ Why should it be differentiated? Furthermore, victory is not decided by fighting the enemy you face. The victor is already determined before the fight even begins so there is no need to wait for commencement. The Way of combat strategy must be pursued always with no deviation. The laws of strategy are to be followed, but not blindly. Even secrets cannot be hidden. Carrying it through will reveal many things. When engaged in a difficult contest, wait [until the right time comes]. You can strike the hanging bell only when you are deep inside the temple building. [So, to to become accomplished in the Way of combat strategy you must train hard and enter the depths.]

From ancient times, there have been several dozen traditions in Japan expounding their own methods for pursuing the art [of swordsmanship]. What they consider to be their Way, however, is comprised of rough tactics centered on brute strength, or a preference for gentleness instead with the focus placed on trivial principles. Or, they may depend only on long swords or have a proclivity for short swords. They invent a multitude of flawed procedures (stances and forms) and label them *omote* (surface) and *oku* (interior). Alas, there cannot be two Ways. Why is it [when making various claims] they keep making the same mistakes? Those who promote false Ways to gain fame and fortune do as they please, flaunting their “skills” to deceive the world. That they win is only because they choose less skilled opponents to fight. It is like somebody with a smattering of ability defeating somebody with none whatsoever. It is totally wrong to refer to it as a [universal] discipline and there is nothing that can be taken from it.

I have immersed my spirit [into the Way of combat strategy], honed my inner thoughts [in training] for a long time and finally mastered this Way.

The warrior must always carry two swords in his daily life, one long and one short. As such, it is fundamental to know how to use both. This is like having the sun and the moon in the heavens. I have laid down that there are five ways to hold the sword (upper, middle, lower, left side and right side). This is like the five stars (Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Mercury and Saturn) that occupy the skies around the Polaris. Just as the five stars rotate and the months pass by [in an orderly fashion], anything that contravenes that order is challenged and rejected. There are five sword stances (*kamae*): *jōdan* (upper), *chūdan* (middle), *gedan* (lower), *hidari-waki* (left side) and *migi-waki* (right side). Each one has meaning [as an effective stance] depending on the situation. This is different from other schools promoting their various *omote* and *oku* procedures. When I engage in a fight, I draw both of my swords immediately. If I only have a short sword and no long sword, then I will fight with that. If I do not have a short sword, then I will resort to using my bare hands. One way or another, I will be victorious. Depending on the circumstances, a large sword [equal in length to the space between your outstretched arms] might not be sufficient, whereas a short one [the length of your thumb] might well be. There are times when you need to initiate the attack against a strong enemy. At other times you should hold back and wait for the right moment, even though the enemy is weak. Avoid prejudices and base your action on the time and circumstances, maintaining your “center” [so that you can respond to anything freely]. The “center” is the “Universally Correct Way.” The center is precisely what the Way of combat strategy that I stand for is based on.

A person once proclaimed, “What difference does it make whether you know [the Way of strategy] or not?” Zhao Kuo² [who did not know] lost his kingdom to the state of Qin. Zhang Liang³ [who did know] helped build the Han kingdom.⁴ The difference between knowing and not knowing [the Way of combat strategy] is as obvious as the “fish eye” (that the snake gifted to the Marquis of Sui for saving his life, one of the “Two Treasures of Spring and Autumn”), which does not compare to a real gemstone. Also, a warlord of old⁵ once said, “Fighting with a sword is to combat only one enemy at a time [so is not worth my time]. I would rather understand how to destroy thousands of enemies.” This is such a narrow-minded remark. Once the Way of swordsmanship is mastered and you take stock, you will see clearly what has to be done to beat the enemy’s tactics, whether it be against ten thousand men in pitched battle or in demolishing a well-guarded castle. Good Heavens, who would consider such a thing [as swordsmanship] to be a trivial affair? It is, in fact, a magnificent Way [applicable to the principles of all things].

One who receives sustained instruction in the particulars of the Way of combat strategy will arrive eventually. That is not to say it is easy. If you purge yourself of mistaken ideas and methods in pursuit of the Way, progress in a correct manner, train day

in and day out endeavoring to become an expert, a mystical power will aid you in mastery [of the principles of strategy]. [What is the “direct path”? (*jikidō*)] Simply by looking you will be able to tell what it is and what it is not. If your [daily] deportment is conducted according to the Way, you will not falter even if you do not possess in-depth knowledge. You will not regret your actions. You will eventually become a master [of the Way].

Even someone who has perfected various skills [of the sword], and who can execute techniques expertly, he will fail as if he were scooping broth with his hands when it comes to conveying his knowledge to others.

My Way alone [as it conforms to the principles] is mastered by the spirit so that the body can exhibit the skills. Accordingly, one will be a master for eternity. Any successor who talks of a true “Way” is most certainly following mine. Why are there so many different “Ways” when there is but one that is valid? When somebody favors something new in an attempt to break from the old ways, that is, in essence, discarding the level path for the sake of a [pointless] detour.

I say this as Heaven is my witness. Boasting I am not. The Way should be thought of as follows: there is only a sincere heart and a “direct path.” This concludes my introduction.

THE MIRROR ON THE WAY OF COMBAT

HEIDŌKYŌ

兵道鏡

◎ Similar articles in *Gorin-no-sho* and *Heihō Sanjūgo-kajō*

○ Similar article in *Gorin-no-sho*

● Similar article in *Heihō Sanjūgo-kajō*

△ Later addition in *Heidōkyō* 36

(1) The Mindset of Strategy and Positioning (心持ちの事 付 座之次第) ◎

With regards to mindset as you engage in a contest, be calmer than normal and try to see into your opponent's mind. The enemy whose voice becomes higher in pitch, eyes widen, face reddens, muscles bulge and face grimaces is basically incompetent and will [clumsily] hit through to the ground. When faced with a [second-rate] adversary such as this, maintain serenity of mind and observe his face dispassionately so as not to provoke him. Then, taking hold of your sword, smile and assume a position lower than the upper stance (*jōdan*). Coolly evade his blow as he tries to attack you. When the enemy appears somewhat bewildered by your unusual attitude, this is the time to strike.

Also, if your opponent is quiet, eyes narrowed, body at ease, and he is holding his sword in a relaxed manner as if his fingers are floating on the hilt, assume that he is an expert. Do not saunter carelessly into his range. You must seize the initiative and assail him skillfully, driving him back and striking in quick succession. If you are nonchalant with such a competent opponent, he will corner you. It is crucial to ascertain how capable your enemy is.

In terms of where you should position yourself, the same conditions apply in both spacious or cramped locations. Step in so that walls will not impede your sword swings from either side. Take an approximate stance with the long sword and nimbly close in on your foe. If your sword should collide with some barrier, the enemy will become emboldened and will hem you in. If your sword looks as if it might scrape the ceiling, determine the actual height with the tip and be mindful thereafter. You can employ either sword for this, as long as it is the one that cannot be used [in attack while you do this]. Keep the light behind you. With your usual training, be prepared to freely apply any kind of technique with a relaxed mind, but always execute with urgency. It is important to adapt according to the circumstances.

(2) About Gaze (目付之事) ◎

Direct your eyes on the enemy's face. Do not focus on anything else. Since the mind is projected in [facial] expressions, there is no place more revealing than the face to fix one's gaze. The way of observing the enemy's face is the same as looking through the mist at trees and rocks on an island two and a half miles [4 km] in the distance. It is the same as peering at birds perched atop a shanty 100 yards [91 meters] away through the falling rain or snow. It is also the same as beholding a decorative wooden board used to cover the ridge and purlin ends of a roof gable or the tiles on a hut. Calmly focus your gaze [to take everything in]. It is a mistake to look at the place you intend to strike. Do not move your head to the side. Feign inattentiveness as you observe the enemy's entire body at once. Furrow your brows as you peer but do not wrinkle your forehead. This cannot be conveyed with words and letters.¹

(3) Taking Hold of the Sword (太刀取り様之事) ◎

In taking hold of the sword(s), your index fingers should float with your other fingers and your thumbs grasping firmly. The same principles apply to the way the hilt is held for both the right and left hands. Swords are brought together with the tip of the short sword at a position six inches [15cm] over and approximately seven inches [18 cm] forward of the long sword's guard (*tsuba*). It is bad to bend your elbows, but they are no good extended either as they will be too rigid to move freely and it will be difficult to see [your enemy]. It is best to bend your right elbow about three inches [7 cm] and your left elbow around four inches [10 cm]. Remove the tautness in your body if it is difficult to see even when your wrists are curved or turned. Holding your long sword in the correct manner means that you have the right mind to strike the enemy spontaneously. This is why this instruction is fundamental. There are oral teachings.

(4) About Closing the Distance When Facing Off (太刀合いを積る之事) ●

When closing in on your opponent, the position six inches [15 cm] from the sword tip is the “past” (*kako*), the “percussion point” (*monouchi*)² of the blade is the “present” (*genzai*), and the point of contact is the “future” (*mirai*).³ After unsheathing your long sword,⁴ take the initiative from the “past” position and advance by sliding your tip through to the opponent's “present” and strike immediately. Entering from “past” to “present” is achieved through using your sword to “ride” over the top, or detach from or evade [the enemy's sword]. Do not falter when you reach the “present.” You are likely to miss if you strike from the “past.” If you strike too deeply from the “present,” then you will end up hitting the ground. Any closer, however, and you should grab hold of him. Stopping at this point is dangerous as well. It is vital to hit and slide in. To be conveyed orally.



Figure 2

(5) About Footwork (足遣い之事) ◎

In terms of how to use your feet, move in without hesitation the moment you draw your sword. When you ride through to the “present,” strike with your feet in unison [with the sword]. After drawing your long sword, move around and in from the right if it is difficult to attack. If you move around to the left, you will be too far away, leaving you with little room to maneuver. Seeing your stance with the long sword at the ready, if the enemy moves to the left, follow and then move back again. Immediately take the initiative to drive him back and capitalize on his surprise. As he is startled, you will clearly see the place to strike him. Never drop your guard here. Strike keenly without moving in [too] deeply. It is important to adapt according to the circumstances.

(6) About Posture (身之懸之事) ◎

Regarding posture, lower your face slightly without making a [tense] “bull neck” and open your shoulders. Do not stick out your chest but thrust out your stomach. Keep your backside in and your hips steady. Bend your knees slightly and tread firmly with your heels. Your toes should be light and pointing outward. When you strike, keep your face the same [downward angle], contract your neck [like a bull], stick out your chest and backside, straighten your knees, lift your heels up and stand strongly on your toes. Strike while lifting your left foot up. Do not relinquish your guard after the strike. Glare at your opponent. The moment he lifts his head up, strike him down emphatically. Conveyed orally.

Omote Procedures (Seven Dual-Sword Forms)

△ (36-7) About “Machachi-no-Kurai (Chūdan)” (前八之位之事)

(7) About “Extended Cut” (指合ぎりの事)

In *sashiai-giri* (extended cut), point your long sword at the enemy's right eye at the “past” position. As he strikes, pull your shoulder away and evade the blow completely without bending your elbows and wrists. Step forward with your right foot as you raise your long sword overhead, and move your left foot up in quick succession, followed by a big step with the right again. Pull the sword down toward your knee to block the opponent's blow just below the “percussion point” (*monouchi*) [on your sword] on the flat of his blade near the sword guard. Step in and place your left foot below his groin as you wedge the [crossed] swords into his neck [forcing him down]. The enemy will try to somehow get on top of you. He may also try to seize your sword. Stamp down on his chest with your left foot. It is important to adapt according to the circumstances.

(8) About Detaching from “Change” (転変はづす位之事)

In *tenpen-no-kurai* (change), the stance is the same as that for *sashiai-giri* [no. 7]. Join the “past” positions and ride your opponent's sword to enter “present” as you strike and maneuver in so that your feet are close. As he carelessly moves away, or

he attempts to knock your sword down with all his strength, quickly detach your long sword's tip and sharply pull your right hand back to your shoulder without moving your left hand [holding the short sword]. Step in with your right foot, then lift your left foot up high while striking the enemy horizontally across his upper arms as he pulls back. To be conveyed orally.

(9) Same as above (Change) “Striking Down” (同、打落さるゝ位)

The stance and entry for the *uchi-otosaruru* (striking down) procedure is the same as [8] above. Your feet are together when taking the guard position. Step out with the right foot to ride the opponent's sword as you move around. With sword extended, the opponent will attempt to strike it out of your hand with force. Do not worry about the long sword and allow it to drop down naturally. Keeping your head perfectly still, extend your hand and assume a stance to the front left. When the enemy attacks your hand, pull it back to your right shoulder while deflecting, but not with the side of your blade. Be ready to deflect it by adjusting the blade angle below to parry upward [diagonally]. It is important to adapt according to the circumstances.

(10) About “In-no-Kurai (Yin)” and “Katsu-Totsu” (陰位之事 付喝咄)

With *in-no-kurai*,⁵ face the front with your left foot slightly forward and your left arm extended so that the tip of your short sword is pointing at the opponent's left eye. With distance closed in the front, take your long sword vertically up into the *jōdan* position and cut over the short sword at the enemy's hand. If the tip of your opponent's long sword is in contact with the tip of your short sword, this means you are in range to strike his hand.

With *katsu-totsu* (cut-thrust, thrust-cut), move your left foot forward while directing the tip of your long sword at the enemy, revealing to him the back of the blade. When the enemy attacks, quickly extend your arm while cutting up from the tip. The faster and harder the strike is, the better. Step forward with your right foot as you strike. If the distance is too great to follow through with *katsu-kotsu*, pull your [back] foot up [to close the gap]. If the distance is suitable, switch your feet on the spot as you attack. If you are close, pull your right foot back as you execute *katsu-totsu* in the same position. When using a shorter long sword, deflect (*uke-nagashi*) the enemy's blow and then strike. *Katsu-totsu* is ineffective when the distance is too close. In such a situation, be prepared to thrust the enemy in the chest. It is important to adapt according to the circumstances.

(11) About “Yō-no-Kurai (Yang)” and Mindset for “Evasion” (陽位之事 付たり貫く心持ち) ○

With *yō-no-kurai*, shift your short sword in accordance with the enemy's guard and make a cross while calmly extending your right arm [to draw the long sword] and assume the left-side stance (*hidari-wakigamae*). Strike the enemy's hand diagonally upward. It is better if the long sword continues through to the upper *jōdan* stance when contact is made. Edge forward a little from your right foot with your hand directed to the right as you hit.

The mindset for evasion (*nuku*) is to employ the same cadence as the enemy as he attempts to knock your sword out of the way as you slap at his hands. Show that you are going to slap, then suddenly swing the blade around and over [as you avoid his attempted parry] and cut at the neck. If the enemy does not attack first, then there is no need to evade. It is important here to alternate your hands [when cutting] and aim for his arms. To be conveyed orally.

(12) Same as above (Yang) “Slap and Advance” (同位 はる積之事)

With *haru-tsumori* (slap and advance), enter to the “present” point with the tip of your long sword, extend your arms and place the long sword to your left side [with the tip pointing back] as you pivot the right side of your body forward. Then turn your hand and slap diagonally upward from below. This is when you have time to take both swords in hand. When the enemy is approaching at speed, parry his sword powerfully with your long sword [without bothering to unsheathe your short sword first], and then show your intention to follow through and cut. As the enemy tries to slap your sword away in turn, this is when you must really pounce. It is no good if you are too close. Again, if he attacks quickly, thrust from underneath as if to deflect, but extend out to strike his hands. Many oral teachings.

(13) About “Jōkatō” (定可当之事)

In *jōkatō*, the left foot and side of the body are moved slightly forward with the point of your short sword and the enemy's long sword meeting at the “past” point. This is your fixed position to strike (*jōkatō*). Push the tip of your long sword forward with your chest open to make your body look large. As if hugging a big tree, bend your elbows but do not twist your wrists. Change the direction of your hands from below and hit up diagonally, slashing his hands on the upward swing and cutting straight into his neck on the return. Stretch out your arms with the upward cut. Lift your right foot as you parry up and stamp the ground as you deliver the downward blow. It is important to adapt according to the circumstances.

Kachimi-no-Kuraie (Seven Dual-Sword Methods for Winning)

(14) About Taking the Initiative (先を懸くる位之事) ◎

There are various ways to initiate an attack. If the enemy is holding his sword in the middle *chūdan* or lower *gedan* position, assume the *in-no-kurai* stance⁶ and immediately assail the enemy with a strong resolve to strike, waving your long sword slightly as you enter to the “past” point. Flex your legs a little and attack with certainty by moving in briskly to force him back. If the enemy is ready in the upper *jōdan* position, assume the lower *gedan* position and move in from your left foot, projecting that you are about to rush him. Then attack his neck to pin him down. Here, you would normally assume the *sashiai-giri* position [no. 7

above]. When you reach the “past” point, lift up on your back foot and prepare to strike down by raising your long sword 12 inches [30 cm], aiming at his neck to drive him back. You can take the initiative with either sword. Do not do what he expects. Catch him off guard by changing rhythm. Do not engage if you sense that he knows what you are going to do. Oral instruction.

(15) About “Kissaki-gaeshi” (切先返し之事) ◎

To execute *kissaki-gaeshi* [swinging the sword(s) alternately cutting from one side to the other], the tip of your long sword rides up to the “present.” As you bring your feet together, aim for the mark as you change the sword to the opposite trajectory. If your target is clear and your opponent is close, turn the blade instantly with a small motion. If you are a little far away, prepare to turn your hands quickly as you exhale and enter forcefully with your body and legs aiming to cut his hands on the downward cut. When the enemy attacks you, pull your hand back to the right to evade while simultaneously preparing to counter. Throw your long sword out to cut in a large motion [while blocking with the short sword] as you take a big step forward with the right foot to trap his left leg as you strike at his neck. The blade is then swung around to cut vertically through his nasal bridge. Coming off the strike, step back and adopt the *yō-no-kurai* position (*hidari wakigamae*) [no. 11]. The feeling to slash is the same as before. This cannot be conveyed with words and letters.

(16) About Striking the Legs (足を打つ位之事)

There are three ways to strike your opponent’s legs. If he is in the *gedan* position to the right rear, hold your long sword slightly higher than *gedan* and move around as if to bring it to your left shoulder. When your long sword’s tip reaches the “present” point, do not stop but keep moving your feet quickly as you enter deeply, then strike him as he steps back. Never look down at your feet or give away your intended target as you strike as swiftly as you can with *kissaki-gaeshi*. If in close, receive his attack [with the short sword] as you cut. If the enemy is holding his sword in a high position, also assume the *jōdan* higher stance, lean forward and move in quickly to the “present” position to strike at his legs. Immediately go back into *yō-no-kurai*. Also, when the enemy tries to attack from above the middle stance, turn the blade of your long sword so that it faces up, bend your elbows and bring the sword to the right side ready for *kissaki-gaeshi*. Strike down at his legs while parrying the enemy’s sword upward with the short sword. Cut the legs again as you go back to assume half-*jōdan*. It is important to adapt according to the circumstances.

(17) About Attacking the Arms (手を打つ位之事)

When the enemy has assumed a stance with his sword extended to the front in a position lower than *chūdan*, move to the right and lower the tip of your long sword onto the “past” point and advance to the “present.” From there deliver a punchy strike to his hands. The cutting motion is no more than 12 inches [30 cm] or so but must be vigorous and fast. Swing the blade around with *kissaki-gaeshi* and strike with both hands. The smaller and stronger the strike, the better. If he moves to the left, lower your hands, cross your two swords and attach them to the enemy’s. Slash at the fingernails on the enemy’s right hand by directly moving the long sword up 12 inches [30 cm]. If the enemy is fast, do a traversing crosscut. It is important to maneuver quickly and not leave yourself open. Oral teaching.

△ (36-19) The Mindset for Thrusting (春く心持の事)

(18) About “Disengaging the Sword Tip” (切先外す位之事)

Disengaging the sword is done by moving the shoulders and hands. However, it is bad to move your hands too much. Disengaging with the left hand is done with a swift movement. Lift the right (long sword) hand, lift it up a little higher, then resume your stance. Step out with your right foot when disengaging with the left hand, and with your left foot when disengaging with the right hand. As soon as you have disengaged, strike at the enemy’s arms without giving him a chance to attack. It is not good to spin to the side when striking. Conveyed orally.

(19) About “Riding” (乗る位之事)

The approach of “riding” is not only for [sliding over with] the sword. Neither is it just riding with your arms, elbows, shoulders, hips or feet. It means that as soon as your opponent unleashes an attack, you must envelop him with your whole body at once, riding in from the sword tip to the tips of the toes. When the enemy moves his sword, ride up it without delay. When the “present” point is passed, keep following through and ride into him without stepping back even if your swords do not meet. Move slightly faster than a trot and mount the enemy without hesitation. When he blinks, stop suddenly and cut his hands. Further instructions conveyed orally.

(20) About “Shuffling Feet” (すり足の事)

“Shuffling feet” (*suriashi*) is used when the enemy is complacent and has both hands on his sword in the *chūdan* middle stance, or suchlike. As you draw your long sword, step out slightly with your left foot, bring your hands together lightly clasped, hips settled, and face your opponent front on. When he is about to attack, step out a little more with the left foot and then leap in suddenly with the right foot, bending at the left knee as you block the blow from underneath [with both swords forming a cross]. This must be executed with considerable power. Do not hesitate even a little. This cannot be conveyed with words and letters.

- △ (36-23) Genken Shikigen (眼見色現)
- △ (36-24) Jimon Shōshutsu (耳聞声出)
- △ (36-25) Binyū Kōken (鼻入香顕)
- △ (36-26) Zettō Mibun (舌当味分)
- △ (36-27) Shinshi Sokugyō (心思触行)
- △ (36-28) Igo Hōgaku (意悟法学)

(21) About “Shin-no-Kurai” (真位の事)

With *shin-no-kurai* (the sword of truth), when the enemy is using two swords you can cut from the “past-past” position. Step out with your left foot as you bend your right knee and swing with *jōkatō* [from the right-side stance], swapping your feet as you gauge the distance. Assume *yō-no-kurai* [left-side yang stance] and move in again to deflect the enemy’s sword, or change to *katsu-totsu* as you step out with your left foot and repeat the cut-thrust movement. Make sure your blows are powerful and continuous. It is vital that you take the initiative. It is also important to keep an eye on the enemy’s short sword, and to not miss a beat. When the sides are restricted, step out with the left foot and stretch out, executing *katsu-totsu* as you extend and strike as many times as possible. Numerous oral instructions.

(22) About the “Two Swords of Existence and Nonexistence” (有無二剣の事)

Umu-no-niken (two swords of existence and nonexistence) is employed by holding the short sword up higher with the tip directed at the enemy, and the long sword resting [back] on your left knee.⁷ When the enemy advances, slash his hands from underneath with the long sword while cutting down from above with the short sword. When going back, if the enemy does not assume the high guard and tries to hit the lower hand [right], strike with the short sword hand. When he tries to defend, take your long sword in two hands in the *kasumi* stance⁸ as you parry upward, and then [immediately] flip the sword to cut down. If the enemy is bothered by your short sword and lifts his arms up, strike his hands from below [with the long sword]. Do not get too close to the enemy. For the stance, step out with your left foot while keeping your right foot 8–9 inches [20–23 cm] to the side. When constrained by space, leave your left foot where it is and step out with the right using this momentum to cut. It is important to adapt according to the circumstances.

(23) About “Throwing the Sword” (手離剣・打ち様の事)

Place your forefinger on the back of the short sword when executing *shuriken* (throwing the sword).⁹ Keep your wrists firm and your shoulders relaxed and throw the blade as if thrusting at the enemy’s “star”¹⁰ where your eyes are fixed. It is because you are throwing with the image of cutting that the sword flies true. If you are close, throw the sword gently with the tip slightly up. When the distance is increased, with the enemy 6 feet [2 meters] away, lift the tip of the sword up about 6 inches [15 cm] to throw. If you are 9 feet [3 meters] away, lift the tip up 12 inches [30 cm] and 18 inches [45 cm] for a distance of 12 feet [3.6 meters]. It is not a problem to throw with the tip higher than the “star.” The opposite is true, and it must never be lower. The more power you use to throw [in this case], the further the tip will fall and miss its mark with a thud.¹¹ Refrain from bracing yourself too much when you throw. Look up and stick out your chest while stepping out. The more weight you have riding on the back [foot], the better. Perform one or two practice swings as you shout *Ei-Ei!* Load your body [like a spring] as you take a deep breath and then release it, yelling *Totsu!* Do not throw while vocalizing *Ei!* Practice this diligently.

(24) About “Fighting Many Opponents” (多敵の位の事) ○

When facing multiple opponents, face the front and step out slightly with your left foot. Make sure that you are able to see all your opponents at once. Charge swiftly at the one who seems the strongest and cut him down first. The stance you take should be with the short sword pointing back to the left and the long sword back to the right. With both hands back, extend your posture with your chest and feet pushing forward and the tips of each sword almost meeting at the back. When you know that the enemy is in range, step out with your right foot and thrust both the long and short swords toward the enemy’s eyes with the long sword hand [right] swinging up and then back down. Then, stepping out with the left foot, return to your original stance. Expand your chest as much as possible when swinging the swords. You should be able to hit enemies to your left side convincingly. It is important to adapt depending on the circumstances. Do not swing the swords too excessively, but be sure to take the initiative. Many oral teachings.

(25) About “Taking the Hand”¹² (実手取りの事)

To apprehend an opponent who is holed up, first go toward the main entrance and probe each side of the doorway with a *yari* (pike). Hold your two swords together in a middle-low stance, draping clothing over the scabbard of the short sword. Step forward with your left foot and assume your stance. When you enter the house, rest the *yari* on your left shoulder and poke at the enemy’s face. The enemy will frantically try to swat it away, thereby losing his composure. Assume a higher *chūdan* (middle) stance with the sword and block his attempts while discarding the clothing [concealing the swords]. Take hold of the blade of your short sword and hold it together with the back of your long sword as you push him away. Thrust at the enemy’s chest as you pull his *wakizashi* (short sword) out. Then drop the swords while grabbing the enemy’s right hand with your left before he can do anything. Quickly taking hold of his wrist, insert your long sword under his right side, pressing down on his chest and arm to knock him flat while stepping on his wrist and the hilt of his sword. Tie him up without delay. Keep the *yari* pressed against his face until he is completely subdued. Oral teaching.

(26) Drawing Swords of Different Lengths and Compatible Stances (太刀・刀、抜き合い様の事 付、あい太刀・あわざる太刀の事) ○

With regard to drawing long and short swords, when the interval [between you and the enemy] is 3–6 feet [1–1.8 meters] strike directly with your short sword. When it is further away, first draw your short sword [with your right hand] and quickly transfer it to your left. Unsheathe the long sword as you would in *yō-no-kurai* (yang posture) [no.11]. If the enemy attacks first, do not bother with the long sword. Strike his hand [immediately with the short sword] to prevent him from drawing. If the enemy does not attack, draw both of your swords as you please. If you have a smaller-sized *wakizashi*, which is easy to unsheathe [just with the left hand], coolly take out your long sword first and assume the upper stance (*jōdan*) as this will make it difficult for the enemy to approach. Also, with swords drawn, the position of *jōkatō* is useful against *hidarisha* (left diagonal) and *jōdan*-blocking *kasumi* stances. *In-no-kurai* (yin) is functional against *gedan* with both hands extended, and *chūdan*. *Katsu-totsu* is suitable against one-handed *chūdan* and one-handed left *jōdan*. *Yō-no-kurai* (yang) is useful against opponents in two-handed *jōdan*. You must consider your enemy's *engarde* stance and implement appropriate tactics. As for unsuitable measures, *jōkatō* is no good against the *migisha* (right diagonal) stance and one-handed *jōdan*. *In-no-kurai* is ineffectual against left diagonal, right diagonal and single-handed *jōdan* and *gedan* stances. *Katsu-totsu* will not work well against left diagonal, high single-handed stances to the right and the one-handed *gedan*. *Yō-no-kurai* is not compatible with left diagonal right diagonal, one-handed *jōdan* and *gedan* stances. *Katsumi-no-kurai* techniques are adjusted to the way the enemy holds his sword. There are many occasions in which *kissaki-gaeshi* and the like are not viable. Oral teachings.

(27) About the “Ultimate One-Sword Strike” (是極一刀の事)

Zegoku-ittō (ultimate one-sword strike) is employed at times when you only have one sword unsheathed. If your opponent is skilled and there are few openings to exploit to achieve victory, take your sword back to your side, allowing plenty of space. Step out with your right foot, swing your sword once or twice, then retreat as you come into contact. Leaving your left foot where it is, observe the openings that arise as your opponent counters [your initial probing]. Strike as hard as you can at the “past” position with the long sword and swiftly unsheathe your short sword to cut his hand as he attempts to block. The shorter the [short] sword, the better when in close [as you can unsheathe it directly with your left hand]. When you have no recourse [to do anything else], this will lead to victory which is why it is the ultimate technique.¹³

(28) About the “Direct Path” (直通の位の事) ◎

Jikitsū-no-kurai (“direct path”) is the soul of combat.¹⁴ All the teachings I have outlined above represent parts of the human body.¹⁵ Nothing more is needed. They must never be neglected. Depending on the situation, there are times when some techniques will not be suitable, but nothing will work without them [in your repertoire]. For example, the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, hands and feet are what our bodies are comprised of. If one of these things is missing, then we are incomplete. The sword techniques that I have conveyed must all be committed to memory and used intuitively. Without the soul and spirit of the “direct path,” they amount to random madness. In all the techniques, be sure to seize the initiative and take the attack to the enemy. This will enable you to identify target areas.

You must then determine what techniques or guards will be effective and what are not viable in a particular situation. Gauge how to close the distance, then commit with single-minded resolve to follow through to your mark (star) and attack without deviating. For example, even if you have to deflect the whole world, the flight of your sword must not diverge from its path. Purge yourself of fear. When you know the moment for that one [direct and decisive] strike of *jikitsū*, let the power surge through you to deliver the cut. It is no different when you enter the opponent's space to arrest him. Advance rapidly, thinking of nothing other than grabbing hold of him. The further in you get, the better. Without the mind of “direct path,” your swords will be lifeless. Even this and discover what it means. Even retreat counts as a loss. When we speak of the “interior” (deepest principles),¹⁶ nothing is deeper than this.

When we talk of the gateway (fundamental principles), nothing is more fundamental than this. The great monk Kūkai¹⁷ traveled deep into the mountain when planning to construct a monastery in the innermost reaches of Mt Kōya. Thinking it was still not far enough, he continued walking further, but eventually came across dwellings again. He said, “The further I entered, the closer I came to human habitation; I had looked too far in.”¹⁸ The interior is not the interior. The gate is not the gate. There are no special, secret interior teachings to look for if the great wisdom of combat strategy surges through your sinews and veins. Just make sure that nobody to your front or back can ever get the better of you. This cannot be conveyed with words and letters.

Upon mastering the secret techniques of my teacher¹⁹ in the 10th month of Keichō 9 (1604), I resolved to outline the above 6 [+]²⁰ 7 [+]²¹ 7 [+]²² 8 articles (= 28) in this “clear mirror” text as a record of my awareness.²⁰ I shall call it *Heidōkyō*—Mirror on the Way of Combat—and it shall be bestowed on my disciples to convey sublime teachings, serving as a license of proficiency (*menkyo-kaiden*). This unparalleled combat strategy of past and present will continue in an unbroken line for generations to come. This is why I have documented the secret teachings of my school, and it is what makes it an incomparable book of secrets.²¹ Even if someone has in their possession a license by my hand, if he does not also have this scroll then he is forbidden from employing the techniques and procedures of my school [in matches].²² How can one possibly be victorious in a contest without absorbing these 28 articles? In light of an exemplary attitude [Ochiai Chūe'mon] to not share knowledge of the Enmei-ryū even with those closest, and dedication shown in the study of this school, I hereby confer this scroll authenticating attainment of the highest level of technical mastery in the Enmei-ryū. These are indeed the secret teachings.

Enmei-ryū “Champion of the Realm” Miyamoto
Musashi-no-Kami Fujiwara Yoshitsune
Auspicious Day, 12th Month, Keichō 10 (1605)

NOTES ON COMBAT STRATEGY

HEIHŌ-KAKITSUKE

兵法書付

Having focused intently on the study of combat strategy, I hereby convey in writing the gist of what I have learned. Expressing the Way [of combat strategy] in writing, however, is not something that can be accomplished easily. I will restrict my script to matters in the order in which they come to mind. If you forget the methods for wielding your sword or are unsure on matters of form, read carefully what I have outlined here so as not to deviate from the Way.

(1) About Mindset (心持やうの事)

The mindset required [of the warrior] is to relentlessly deliberate on strategy, whether you are active or sitting down, with others or on your own. You must constantly reflect on this Way. Anticipate how to never lose to others, and with an expansive and straight heart act according to the circumstances within the model of the Way of combat strategy. Work out the mind of others and make sure that they cannot read yours. Do not rely on one thing but be aware of strengths and weaknesses, depths and shallows, leaving nothing to the unexpected. In normal times, and when you meet with the enemy, this mindset is to be maintained, with care taken not to jump to conclusions. Be aware of all things, knowing what is good and bad. This is the mindset for combat strategy.

(2) About Gaze (目付の事)

With regards to where one focuses the eyes, there is only the dual gaze of “looking in” (*kan*) and “looking at” (*ken*). Look carefully at the enemy’s face to figure out his heart and intent. When scrutinizing the enemy’s face, whether he be near or far, do not think of it as close. Absorb it all as if observing from a distance. Keep your eyes narrower than usual and do not move your eyeballs as you scrutinize him intently and calmly. That way you can see all the movements of his hands and feet and even [what is happening at] his left and right sides. The gaze for “looking at” is gentle whereas that for “looking in” is strong enough to peer into the interior of his heart. You will come to know him well as his heart is reflected in his countenance, which is why you should fix your gaze on the face of each enemy.

(3) About Posture (身なりの事)

You should hold your body in a way that makes you appear big. Your expression should be genial and free of wrinkles. The back of your neck should be slightly toughened, with your shoulders neither strained nor slouching forward. Do not jut out your chest. Project your stomach but do not bend your hips. Your legs should not buckle at the knees, and there should be no distortion in your body. Always strive to preserve this combat posture so that you do not need to change your stance when you encounter the enemy.

(4) About Taking Hold of the Sword (太刀の取やうの事)

When taking hold of the sword, the tips of your forefingers and thumbs should touch, with the forefingers held lightly as if floating. The joint of the thumbs should be fastened [to the hilt], the middle finger should grip slightly tighter, with the ring finger and little finger gripping the strongest. To grip correctly [with the right amount of power in the palms], the fork between the thumbs and forefingers are not forcefully attached to the hilt but should be in line with the back of the sword. The wrists should be flexible and loose, not coiled at all. The hilt should be clasped in a way that the fingers do not touch the sword guard (*tsuba*). The very bottom of the hilt is not to be grasped either. The left and right hands should grip the sword(s) in the same way.

(5) About Footwork (足ぶみの事)

Regarding the movement of your feet, the tips of your toes should glide [lightly] whereas the heels should tread heavily. Types of footwork to be avoided include “jumping feet,” “floating feet,” “stomping feet,” “extracting feet” and “seesaw feet.” These are all bad. You have to be able to maneuver unimpeded in [environments such as] mountainous terrain, over rivers and on stony ground. Footwork should not change whether attacking or blocking. Observing how the enemy prepares to strike, it is also very important to stomp with the right foot when attacking. In general, avoid having your stance too wide [by leaving your left foot behind]. The left foot always follows.¹

(6) About the Five Sword Stances (太刀構五つの事)

1. Enkyoku Tachisuji-no-Koto² (一、円極太刀筋之事)

Employed against all sword attacks, the sword pathway of *enkyoku* (middle stance) is broad and is also the most fundamental. The long sword position depends on the enemy and the circumstances. As for the stance itself, the edges of both the left and right swords should not face down or directly to the sides. To keep the enemy at bay, take a position with the long sword tip raised and extended. When you intend to be closer to the enemy, lower the tips slightly and bring the swords nearer your body. When you are thinking of luring the enemy in to attack, lower the swords while keeping them level. When intending to entrap the enemy, or when you have missed the mark, thrust and then, as the enemy tries to strike, pull your long sword back toward your navel with the blade facing down. The target for the thrust is the face and chest. Detach from the enemy’s sword and seize him with your hands. There are three cadences for executing return swings of your sword (*kissaki-gaeshi*). If the attack is made with a small strike, return the blade by swinging it around in one [move]. With a large strike, make the ensuing cut a little slower. Delay the return cut when you lunge at your opponent forcefully as if to stomp on his feet. If you cut up at the hands from below, this is the same as the lower stance (*gedan*). Strike up then follow the path for *kissaki-gaeshi* after hitting the target. It is important not to deviate from the sword’s pathway.

2. Gidan (二、義断のかまへの事)

With the stance of *gidan* (upper),³ the right hand should be placed at ear height. The butt of the long sword’s hilt should not be splayed [too much from the center], nor should the grip be too tight or overly relaxed. Assume a stance that is facing the front. The short sword in the left hand is held down but not extended, and is pointed in a low, middle or high direction depending on the enemy’s stance. The strike itself, fast or slow, shallow or deep, light or heavy depends on the opponent’s attack. The standard target is the enemy’s hands. Don’t cut down, but in a forward motion. When executing *katsu-totsu*,⁴ stand the long sword up, then thrust at and cut the enemy’s right hand. Irrespective of whether your swords clash or not, your hands are the same. It is important to strike rapidly. The alternating cut-thrust movement (*katsu-totsu*) can continue [for as long as the opportunity to strike is there]. This [technique] is difficult [to achieve] if you are too close to the enemy. In which case you must win by taking hold of the enemy. Consider this well.

3. Shigeki (三、驚撃のかまへの事)

There are two ways of employing *shigeki* (lower stance).⁵ For the first, extend the tip of the long sword to the front, making sure it does not veer to the left. Attack the enemy at “one-third” of a strike. Lift your hand up as if to execute a blow, then thrust instead, being sure to avoid the tip of the enemy’s sword. If you have the mind to knock his sword down, strike quickly and then return your hands slowly. In either case, be ready to revert to *kissaki-gaeshi*. Another way of executing *shigeki* is to direct your sword tip at the enemy while lowering your hand to place it on your right leg. Strike the enemy the instant you sense his intention to act. The shallowness or depth, lightness or heaviness of your strike will depend on the enemy’s spirit. This requires much contemplation.

4. Uchoku (四、迂直のかまへの事)

With *uchoku*,⁶ assume the left-side stance (*hidari-waki*), with the long sword (right hand) at the left and the short sword (left hand) not raised high, making sure your arms are not crossed too deeply. Parry the enemy’s strike [from below] the first third of the way through. If you are of a mind to knock his sword down, evade his strike to your left hand by lowering it slightly with a cutting motion, then counter-cut him diagonally [from above] with the right. It is important to strike quickly. Make sure the line of the blade is true as you swing around to strike with *katsu-totsu* and *kissaki-gaeshi*.

5. Suikei (五、水形のかまへの事)

With *suikei*,⁷ the tip of the long sword should not be open to the side, and the left hand (short sword) is thrust out. The left and right arms are held open on each side of the chest, but are not straightened at the elbows. When the enemy launches his attack, cross past his sword as you strike up his centerline to forehead height [into *jōdan*]. The aim is to cut broadly to the front. Do not allow the blade to keep going through to the left. Follow through and swing around with the *kissaki-gaeshi* movement. Depending on the circumstances, you may assume *uchoku* (left-side stance). This needs to be decided in an instant.

Generally, these are the only five sword paths for striking the enemy. There is only one way to cut with a sword [and is in line with these paths]. Be mindful of this.

(7) About Hitting and Striking⁸ (当ると云ト打ト云事)

Hitting is not meant to be a winning strike. Hitting has its own principle. You hit to weaken the enemy and make him act irrationally. Striking, on the other hand, is executed with certainty [and killing in mind]. Consider this carefully.

(8) Hitting the Hands (手に当る事)

There are eight opportunities to hit the hands:

1. First, hit with the “one-count” cadence.⁹
2. Second, slap and hit from *gedan* (lower stance).
3. Third, hit [just as he moves] when you lower the swords.
4. Fourth, facing off in *chūdan* (middle stance), place your long sword on top, then hit with a timing slightly askew from the “one-count” cadence.
5. Fifth, in the same stance, place your long sword underneath and hit.
6. Sixth, hit as the enemy blocks.
7. Seventh, hit from a block.
8. Eighth, when the enemy slaps your strike away, follow through with the long sword and hit.

These are the designated points for hitting. Do not despair if your hit misses the mark. Just realize that your rhythm is wrong.

(9) Hitting the Legs (足に当る事)

There are six opportunities to hit the legs:

1. First, when the enemy blocks.
2. Second, when the enemy tries to deflect your sword.
3. Third, when the enemy assumes a right-side stance.
4. Fourth, when your sword has been hit down.
5. Fifth, when the enemy has a long sword and assumes the *kasumi*¹⁰ stance, revert to the *chūdan* (middle) position and hit his legs.
6. Sixth, when the enemy is in the *chūdan* stance, come from below and strike his legs as you affix your short sword to his sword [to suppress it].

These are the six points for striking¹¹ the legs.

(10) About Blocking (うくと云事)

In the case of blocking:¹²

1. First, affix your sword as the enemy attacks and let it slide off.¹³ Cadence is very important.
2. Second, as the opponent strikes, point the tip of your long sword to the region extending from the right hand to the right eye to block by thrusting the tip into the oncoming blow.

With both blocks, it is important that the movement is not an upward one. The hands are lifted to a higher position as if to thrust forward into the attack [not from underneath].

3. Also, when the enemy is close, you can receive [his attack] by pulling back and counter-striking quickly [with the other sword].

These are the three blocks.

(11) About Moving in Close¹⁴ (入身の位の事)

1. First, block as the enemy attacks and move in close as if to pass through him.
2. Second, when the opponent blocks, affix your sword to his and move in.
3. Third, when the enemy is holding his sword to the right side, or when you hit his legs, or when he is about to block or strike, pivot your body and enter his space.
4. Fourth, enter when your rhythm is not synchronized with the enemy's.

In all cases, it is bad to hunch your back and stick out your arms when moving in close. Pivot forward into a side-on stance¹⁵ and stick close to the enemy. When you enter, be sure you are completely inside. Also, ensure that your line [to cut] is straight, your body is not inclined in the slightest and your movement is powerful. Study this well.

(12) Cadences for Striking the Enemy (敵を打拍子の事)

There are various cadences for striking with the sword.¹⁶ The striking rhythm called “one-count” (*itsu-byōshi*) is to not let your will manifest in your body and mind and strike from the void. Striking from nothing, you deliver a blow at a place your opponent does not expect. This is the “one-count” striking cadence. The enemy is also competing against your spirit and while preparing to attack, strike unexpectedly. This is called an “empty strike” and is a crucial tactic. The “delayed cadence” (*okure-byōshi*) involves leaving your body and spirit behind when [seemingly] delivering the blow, and then landing the [real] strike when your enemy hesitates. This is what is meant by “delayed cadence.” With the “flint spark”¹⁷ blow (*sekka*, or *hishi-bi*), have the intention to slide up the enemy's sword with lightning speed. It must be executed powerfully and fast with every bone and sinew of your body in unison. This should be studied. With the “autumn leaves” strike (*momiji*), the opponent's sword is struck down with speed and force as you affix your sword to his. Even if you do not strike his sword, it is difficult for him to pass [with your sword in his

position on his]. With the “flowing water” strike, attack the enemy in spirit and body as one with one blow, but deliver the long sword calmly and obstinately. There are also several timings for striking at the start, middle and end [of the movement].

(13) About Taking the Initiative (先のかけやうの事)

There are various ways for “taking the initiative.”¹⁸ What is known as *ken-no-sen* (crackdown initiative)¹⁹ is when you instigate an attack on the enemy in order to win. *Tai-no-sen* (cleanup initiative)²⁰ is employed when the opponent attacks. You must modify the timing of the initiative [and strike afterwards]. This requires careful scrutiny. With *tai-tai-no-sen* (coinciding initiative),²¹ both you and the enemy attack each other simultaneously, but you must override his rhythm. Or, there is the initiative employed when your attacking initiative coincides with that of your opponent. Make a sudden change to force your initiative over his. There is also the initiative in which you seize victory by taking your time [slowing things down] when both you and the enemy are brimming in spirit. There are initiatives of a “weak and strong,” “light and heavy,” “shallow and deep” mind. Then there is the “case-by-case” initiative and the “vocal” initiative. These should all be studied.

(14) About Shouting (声をかくると云事)

To shout at your opponent does not mean that you are yelling all the time. You should not shout in time with your striking rhythm. Shouts are made before and after the fact. When it is uncertain where you will attack, then it is feasible to let out a cry beforehand. There is also the post-attack cry in which you bellow after delivering a blow. This is the “after shout.” There is the shout *Ei*, which can be made loudly or quietly. There is also the shout *Maitta*. It depends on the [situation surrounding the] attack. An “accompanying” shout, which is tied to a strike when both rhythms are similar, is *Ya*, and is for overriding the opponent’s cadence. This shout is made inside the mouth, in your heart so that nobody can hear it. These are the three cries of “before,” “after” and “within.”

It may seem that shouting is unnecessary. Nevertheless, as we shout against the wind, waves, and fire on the battlefield, we must also shout down [the enemy’s] vitality. Do not cry out at night. Judge each situation [on its own merits].

The above articles are meant as an outline. Train hard to master each. This is the way to practice combat strategy. Supplementary details shall be documented in other writings.

Auspicious Day, 11th Month, Kan’ei 15 (1638)
Shinmen Musashi Genshin

COMBAT STRATEGY IN 35 ARTICLES

HEIHŌ SANJŪGO-KAJŌ

兵法三十五箇条

Introduction

I humbly commit to paper for the first time² the methods of the Heihō Nitō Ichi-ryū school of combat strategy which I have developed through many years of training. Considering the intended recipient of this text, it is difficult to express the content adequately in words. It concerns the way one must control the sword in the style one normally practices. I will record the principle elements of this as they come to mind.

(1) Why I Name My Way that of “Two Swords” (一、此道二刀と名付事)

I call this Way that of “Two Swords” as we train with a sword in each hand. The left hand is considered of less importance as followers aim to master wielding the long sword with one hand. Learning to wield the sword with one hand is advantageous when in battle formation, while riding a horse, traversing marshes, rivers, narrow paths and rocky surfaces, running, and in a crowd. If you are holding something in your left hand and it is difficult [to brandish the sword with both hands], the sword is operated with [the right] one. A sword held in one hand will feel heavy at first but later you will be able to manipulate it freely. For example, learning to shoot a bow increases strength, and the power for riding horses also comes through training. In terms of the skills of common people, the sailor develops strength through working the rudder and oars. The farmer gains power through using his plow and hoe. You will cultivate strength also through taking up the sword. Nevertheless, it is best to use a sword that suits your physical capabilities.³

(2) About Understanding the Way of Combat (一、兵法之道見立処之事)

The principles of this Way are the same for both large-scale and small-scale strategy. What I write here is for small-scale strategy, but if the task of a general is kept in mind, his arms and legs correspond to his vassals and his torso to his foot soldiers and subjects. It is in this way that the country is governed as if it were a person's body. As such, large- and small-scale conflict is no different in the Way of combat strategy. When practicing strategy, the whole body must be employed as one, devoid of surplus and deficiency, neither too strong nor too weak, with the spirit circulating evenly from head to toe.⁴

(3) About How to Take Hold of the Sword (一、太刀取様之事)

To take hold of the sword, the forefinger and thumb should brush [the hilt] lightly, while the middle finger should hold with medium strength and the ring and little finger grip tightly. As with the sword, there is also “life” and “death” in one's hands. When assuming a fighting stance, parrying or blocking, the hand that forgets about cutting and stops is said to be “dead.” The hand that lives is one that moves in harmony with the sword at any time without becoming rigid and is at ease to cut well. This is called the “live” hand. The wrists should not be entwined, the elbows neither too taut nor too bent, the upper muscles of the arms relaxed and the lower muscles tensed. Study this well.⁵

(4) About Posture (一、身のかゝりの事)

One's posture should be such that the face is not tilted down, nor should it be raised too high. The shoulders are neither tensed nor slouched. The abdomen should be pushed forward but not the chest. One should not bend at the hips. The knees are not

locked. The body faces straight ahead so that it appears to be broad. “Combat posture in everyday life; Everyday posture in combat.” Consider this carefully.⁶

(5) About Footwork⁷ (一、足ぶみの事)

Use of the feet depends on the situation. There are big and small, slow and fast ways of stepping, the same as when you normally walk. Footwork to avoid includes “jumping feet,” “floating feet,” “stomping feet,” “extracting feet” and “seesaw feet.” Notwithstanding the ease or difficulty of footwork wherever you are, be sure to move with confidence. You will learn more about this in a later section.⁸

(6) About Gaze (一、目付之事)

With regards to “fixing one’s gaze,” although many methods have been advocated in the past, these days it usually means that the eyes are directed at the [enemy’s] face. The eyes are fixed in such a way that they are slightly narrower than normal and [the enemy is] observed calmly. The eyeballs do not move, and when the enemy encroaches, no matter how close, the eyes appear to look into the distance. With such a gaze, to say nothing of the enemy’s techniques, you will also be able to see both sides as well. Observe with the dual gaze of “looking in” (*kan*) and “looking at” (*ken*)—stronger with *kan* and weaker with *ken*. Use of the eyes can also communicate intent to the enemy. Intentions are to be revealed in the eyes, but not the mind. This should be examined carefully.⁹

△ (39-1) About the Five-Way Stances (一、五方の構の次第)

1. *Katsu-totsu Kissaki-gaeshi, Jōdan* (Upper stance)
 2. *Gidan, Chūdan* (Middle stance)
 3. *Shigeki, Hidari-waki* (Left-side stance)
 4. *Uchoku, Migi-waki* (Right-side stance)
 5. *Suikai, Gedan* (Lower stance)
- (Refer to the corresponding section in *Heihō-kakitsuke*.)

(7) About Measuring the Interval¹⁰ (一、間積りの事)

There are various theories in other disciplines when it comes to *ma* (timing and interval). I am only concerned here with combat strategy.¹¹ Whatever the Way, the more you train the more you will realize [that the mind should not be fixed in one place]. Basically, when you are at an interval where your sword can strike the enemy, you should think that the enemy’s sword can also reach you.¹² Forget your body when you are set to kill your opponent.¹³ Examine this carefully.

(8) About Mindset (心持之事)

One’s mind should neither dwindle nor be in an excited state. It must not be rueful nor afraid. It is straight and expansive, with one’s “heart of intent” faint and one’s “heart of perception” substantial. The mind is like water, able to respond aptly to changing situations. Water can be a sparkling hue of emerald green, it can be a single drop or a blue ocean. This should be carefully studied.

(9) To Know the Upper, Middle and Lower Levels of Strategy (兵法上中下の位を知る事)

Stances are adopted in combat, but a show of various sword positions in order to appear strong¹⁴ or fast is regarded as lower-level strategy. Further, refined-looking strategy, flaunting an array of techniques and rhythmical mastery to give the impression of beauty and magnificence, is regarded as middle level. Upper-level strategy looks neither strong nor weak, not irregular, not fast, not glorious and not bad. It looks broad, direct and serene. Examine this carefully.¹⁵

(10) About the “Cord-Measure” (いとかねと云事)

Always hold a cord-measure in your mind. By holding the cord against each opponent to size him up, you will see his strengths, weaknesses, straightness, crookedness, and tense and relaxed points. With your mind’s measure, pull the cord, making it straight so that you can quantify the enemy’s heart. With this measure, you should be able to know the round, uneven, long, short, crooked or straight features of the enemy. This must be studied.

(11) About “Sword Pathways” (太刀之道之事)

Not knowing the pathway of the sword inside out make it difficult to brandish your weapon as you like. Furthermore, if [the sword swings are] not decisive,¹⁶ or you do not bear in mind the back and side of the sword blade, or if the sword is used [to chop] like a knife or rice spatula, it will be difficult to enter the frame of mind needed to cut the enemy down. Train to strike your opponent effectively, always thinking about the sword’s pathway, and wield it calmly as if it were a heavy weapon.¹⁷

(12) About “Striking and Hitting” (打とあたると云事)

The methods of striking (*utsu*) and hitting (*ataru*) are both used in swordsmanship. Learning to strike your target with conviction through test cutting¹⁸ and the like will enable you to strike as you please. When you cannot work out a way to make a decisive

strike, hit the enemy any way you can. If the hit connects, even with force, it will never count as a strike. Do not be concerned if you hit the enemy's body or his sword, or even if you miss altogether. Just be mindful of preparing your hands and feet for a true strike. This must be practiced dutifully.¹⁹

(13) About the “Three Initiatives” (三ツの先と云事)

Of the “three initiatives” (*sen*), the first one involves attacking the enemy first.²⁰ The second is the initiative taken when your opponent attacks you.²¹ The third is when you and the enemy attack simultaneously. Your body must be primed to attack first, but strike keeping your legs and spirit centered without being too relaxed or tense, thereby unsettling the enemy. This is *ken-no-sen*, the “crackdown initiative.” Next, when the enemy attacks you, have no concern for your body, but when the distance is close, free your mind and seize the initiative from the enemy as you follow his movement. When you and the enemy attack at the same time, keep your body strong and straight and take the initiative with your sword, body, legs and spirit. Seizing the initiative is of the essence.²²

(14) About “Traversing Critical Points” (渡をこすと云事)

In a situation where you and your opponent are in position to hit each other, you should attack. If you want to move past the critical point, advance with your body and legs and stick to him. There is nothing to fear once you have passed the critical point. This should be considered carefully with reference to my future teachings.²³

(15) On “Body Replaces Sword” (一、太刀にかはる身の事) (Absent in Heihō 39)

“Body replaces sword” means that when you strike with the sword your body should not be connected to it. When he sees your body attacking, he should then see your sword landing. Moreover, it is the same mindset of “sword replaces body.” Keep an empty mind and never strike with sword, body and spirit simultaneously. Examine carefully the notion of mind and body within [within the sword stroke].²⁴

(16) About the “Two Steps” (一、二ツの足と云事)

“Two steps”²⁵ refers to moving both feet in delivering a sword stroke. When you ride or release the enemy's sword, or when you maneuver forward or back, you make two steps. It feels as if your feet are connected. If you make only one step when striking,²⁶ you will be stuck on the spot. Thought of as a pair, this is just like normal walking. This needs to be examined carefully.

(17) About “Trampling the Sword” (一、剣をふむと云事)

This is to tread on the enemy's sword tip with your left foot just as his sword is swung down. If you seize the initiative with your sword, body and mind as you trample on his sword, victory will be yours. Without this mindset, the encounter will degenerate into a tit-for-tat exchange. Your feet will be fine as you will not stamp on the sword all that often. Consider this well.²⁷

(18) About “Arresting the Shadow” (一、陰をおさゆると云)

“Arresting the shadow” (*yin*) means to carefully observe your enemy in order to know if his mind is overly engaged and where it is lacking. Pointing your sword when his mind is preoccupied and diverting his attention, then arresting the shadow of the area that is lacking will upset his rhythm and victory will be for the taking. Even so, it is crucial that you do not leave your mind on the shadow and forget to strike. You must work this out.²⁸

(19) About “Shifting the Shadow” (一、影を動かすと云事)

This shadow is that of *yang*. When the enemy pulls his sword back and assumes a front-on stance,²⁹ suppress his sword with your mind and make your body empty. As soon the enemy encroaches, unleash with your sword. This will surely make him move. When he does, it is easy to win. This method did not exist before. Do not allow the mind to become fixed as you strike at protruding parts of his body. Ponder this carefully.³⁰

(20) About “Detaching the Bowstring” (一、弦をはづすと云事)

“Detaching the bowstring”³¹ is employed when your mind and the enemy's are tightly connected [with a bowstring]. In such a situation, you must promptly detach [the string] with your body, sword, legs and mind. Detaching is most effective when the enemy least expects it. This should be explored.

(21) About the “Small Comb” Teaching (一、小櫛のおしへの事)

The spirit of the “small comb” is to untangle knots. Hold a comb in your mind and use it to slash threads in the enemy's web of entanglement. Entangling with threads and pulling strings are similar. Pulling is stronger, however, as entanglement is a tactic executed with a weaker mind. This should be considered judiciously.

(22) About “Knowing Gaps in Cadence” (一、拍子の間を知ると云事)

“Knowing gaps in cadence”³² depends on the enemy. The cadence of each enemy is different. Some are fast and some are slow. With an opponent who is slow, do not move your body and conceal the start of your sword movement, quickly delivering a blow out of nothing. This is the rhythm of “one-count” (*itsu-byōshi*).³³

With a fast opponent, feign an attack with your body and mind and strike your opponent down after he responds. This rhythm is called the “two-phase traversing cadence” (*ni-no-koshi*).³⁴

The cadence of “no-thought no-form” (*munen-musō*)³⁵ requires having your body primed to strike while holding your spirit and your sword back. As soon as you see a gap in your opponent’s spirit, strike forcefully from nothing. This is the cadence of “no-thought no-form.”

“Delayed cadence” (*okure-byōshi*) is a rhythm employed when your opponent is ready to slap or parry your attack. Ever so slowly, strike at the opening revealed [by him in his movement]. This is “Delayed cadence” [and the enemy will miss as a result]. Practice this rhythm diligently.

(23) About “Stopping the Start” (一、枕のおさへと云事)

“Stopping the start” is employed when you sense the enemy is about to attack. Suppress the start just as he is thinking about striking, before it can take form. Use your mind, body and sword to muzzle the strike. When you sense his intent, it is the perfect time to strike first, or to enter his space, for breaking away and for seizing the initiative. It can be employed in all situations. Train in this judiciously.³⁶

△ (39-2) About “Making it Bind”

(A simplified version of Article 26 in the Water Scroll of *Gorin-no-sho* [Scroll 2].)

(24) About “Knowing the Conditions” (一、景気を知ると云事)

“Knowing the conditions” means to carefully ascertain the ebbs and flows, shallows and depths, weaknesses and strengths of the location and the enemy. By always utilizing the teaching of the “cord-measure” [10 above], such conditions can be sensed immediately. By catching the conditions of the moment, you will be victorious whether facing the front or the rear. Ponder this carefully.³⁷

25) About “Becoming your Enemy” (一、敵に成と云事)

You should think of your own body as the enemy’s.³⁸ Whether the opponent is holed up somewhere or is a mighty force,³⁹ or you come face to face with an expert in the martial Way, you must anticipate the difficulties going through his mind. If you cannot calculate the confusion in his mind, you will mistake his weaknesses for strengths, see a novice as an accomplished master, view a small enemy as a powerful one, or grant your foe advantages when he has none. Become your enemy. Study this well.

(26) “Retained Mind” and “Freed Mind”⁴⁰ (一、残心放心の事)

“Retained mind” (*zanshin*) and “freed mind” (*hōshin*) should be employed as the circumstance and moment dictates. When you take up your sword, it is standard for the “heart of intent” (*i-no-kokoro*) to be freed and the “heart of perception” (*shin-no-kokoro*) to be retained (kept hold of). The moment you strike at the enemy, release your “heart of perception” and retain your “heart of intent.” There are various methods for employing “retained mind” and “freed mind.” This should be studied carefully.

(27) About “Opportunity Knocks” (一、縁のあたりと云事)

“Opportunity knocks”⁴¹ is when the enemy comes in close to attack you with his sword and you either slap it away with your own sword, parry the attack or hit. In all cases of slapping, parrying or hitting, the enemy’s attack should be considered an opportunity. If actions of riding, evading or sticking to the enemy’s sword are all executed with the intention of striking, your body, mind and sword will always be primed to deliver. Carefully consider this.

(28) About “Sticking Like Lacquer and Glue” (一、しつかうのつきと云事)

“Sticking like lacquer and glue”⁴² means to get in very close to the enemy. Stick steadfastly to the enemy with your legs, hips and face, leaving no gaps, just like bonding with lacquer and glue. If there are any gaps, the enemy will have the freedom to apply various techniques. The cadence for moving in to stick to the enemy is the same as “stopping the start” and is executed with a serene state of mind.

(29) About the “Body of an Autumn Monkey” (一、しこうの身と云事)

The “body of an autumn monkey”⁴³ means that when you stick to an enemy’s body, you must do it as if you had no arms. The worst way to attempt this is to leave your body back as you stretch your arms out. If you just extend your arms, your body will lag behind. Using the area from your left shoulder down to the forearm is advantageous in an attack, but never resort to only using your hands. The cadence for sticking to the enemy is the same as [in 28] above.

(30) About “Contesting Height” (一、たけくらべと云事)

“Contesting height”⁴⁴ is employed when very close and clinging to the enemy. Make yourself as tall as you can, as if contesting height. In your mind, make yourself taller than your opponent. The cadence for getting in close is the same as the others. Consider this well.

(31) About the “Door” Teaching (一、扉のおしへと云事)

The body of the “door”⁴⁵ is used when moving in to stick to the enemy. Make the span of your body wide and straight as if to conceal the enemy’s sword and body. Fuse yourself to the enemy so that there is no space between your bodies. Then pivot to the side, making yourself slender and straight, and smash your shoulder into his chest to knock him down. Practice this.

(32) The “General and His Troops” Teaching (一、将卒のおしへの事)

The “general and his troops”⁴⁶ is a teaching that means once you embody the principles of strategy, you see the enemy as your troops and yourself as their general. Do not allow the enemy any freedom whatsoever, neither permitting him to swing nor thrust with his sword. He is so completely under your sway that he is unable to think of any tactics. This is crucial.

(33) About the “Stance of No-Stance” (一、うかうむかうと云事)

The “stance of no-stance”⁴⁷ refers to [the mindset] when you are holding your sword. You can adopt various stances, but if your mind is so preoccupied with the *engarde* position, the sword and your body will be ineffectual. Even though you always have your sword, do not become preoccupied with any particular stance. There are three varieties of upper stance (*jōdan*) as well as three attitudes for the middle (*chūdan*) and lower (*gedan*) stances that you can adopt. The same can be said for the left-side and right-side stances (*hidari-waki* and *migi-waki*). Seen as such, this is the mind of no-stance. Ponder this carefully.

△ (39-3) About “Assessing the Location”

△ (39-4) About “Dealing to Many Enemies”

(Simplified versions of Article 1 in the Fire Scroll [Scroll 3] and Article 33 in the Water Scroll [Scroll 2] of *Gorin-no-Sho*.)

(34) About “The Body of a Boulder” (一、いわをの身と云事)

“The body of a boulder”⁴⁸ is to have an unmovable mind that is strong and vast. You come to embody myriad principles through your training, to the extent that nothing can touch you. All living things will avoid you. Although devoid of consciousness, even plants will not take root on a boulder. Even the rain and wind will do nothing to a boulder. You must strive to understand what this “body” means.

(35) To “Know the Moment” (一、期をしる事)

To “know the moment” is to know opportunities that come quickly and those that come later. It is to know when to retreat and when to engage. In my school, there is an essential sword teaching called “Direct Transmission” (*Jikitsū*).⁴⁹ The particulars of this will be conveyed orally.

(36)⁵⁰ About “Myriad Principles, One Void” (一、万理一空の事)

Although myriad principles return to the Ether, this is all but impossible to explain in writing. I humbly suggest that you contemplate this concept yourself.

The 35 articles prescribed above outline my views on the mindset of strategy and how it is to be approached. Some of the entries may seem deficient but they concern things I have already imparted to you. I have refrained from writing about my school’s sword techniques as I will teach them directly. Should there be any entries you are unsure of, please allow me to explain in person.

An auspicious day, 2nd Month of Kan’ei 18 (1641)⁵¹
Shinmen Musashi Genshin

39-5. [Postscript in *Heihō* 39]

(Written on the fifteenth day of the 8th month of Kanbun 6 [1666] by Terao Kumenosuke.)

The Kokura Monument

Kokura-hibun

小倉碑文

天仰 實相 圓滿 兵法 逝去 不絶

“Ten wa aogu ni, jissō enman no heihō, seikyo shite taezu”

Looking up at Heaven,
The Combat Strategy of
Ultimate Reality and Harmony
Even in [his] Death
Endures Forever

Monument to the late Shinmen Musashi Genshin Niten, master of swordsmanship beyond compare, descendant of the Akamatsu clan of Harima. He died on the 19th day, 5th month, Shōhō 2 [1645], in Kumamoto, province of Higo. On the 19th day, 4th Month, Jōō 3 [1654], this monument was reverently erected by his faithful son [Miyamoto Iori].

Taking one's chances and adjusting to circumstances are characteristic of one who has mastered the Way of a distinguished general. Studying tactics and arduous training in the martial arts are preconditions for men of war. Who was it that walked the dual path of the brush and the sword, whose hands danced in the fray, whose spirited name and honor preceded him? A great man from Harima province, he referred to himself as Musashi Genshin Niten, and was a proud descendant of the Shinmen, a scion of the Akamatsu clan. As I remember, born with a magnanimous spirit, he concerned himself not with trivialities as he was an extraordinary man. He founded the school of swordsmanship which used two swords.

His father's name was Muni, an expert in the *jitte* (truncheon). Musashi followed his father and practiced the martial arts unremittingly day and night while ruminating on the principles of the *jitte*. He learned immeasurable things, recognizing that the humble *jitte* had many unexpected benefits far greater than that of the sword. Nevertheless, the *jitte* is a weapon not often carried. Compared to this, two swords are always worn at the hip. Therefore, utilizing both swords can be just as advantageous as the principle underlying the *jitte*. Musashi gave up the art of the *jitte* in favor of using two swords. His skill with dual swords was as magnificent as a sword dance. His iron swords soared and his wooden swords vaulted. Although his adversaries ran hither and thither to escape his blows, their evasive movements were futile. He seemed like a bolt shot from a powerful crossbow. Never did he miss his mark. Even the great Chinese warrior Yang would have been no match for Musashi. His skill in swordsmanship was sublime and courage emanated from his very being.

Musashi first arrived in the province of Harima when he was thirteen years old. At that tender age, he was keen to test himself in combat against the swordsman Arima Kihei of the Shintō-ryū. It was a comfortable victory for Musashi. When he was sixteen, he ventured to Tajima province in the spring months. It was there that he challenged the formidable swordsman known as Akiyama. Calling for a test of skills, he successfully struck his adversary down without breaking a sweat. His name started surfacing in the region's towns because of these feats of valor.

Musashi then traveled to the capital. It was there, in Kyoto, that the Yoshioka family, veritable masters of the sword, resided. Musashi challenged the family heir, Yoshioka Seijirō, to a match which was to take place at a spot called Rendaino on the edge of the city. There, both men fought courageously like a dragon against a tiger. It was a decisive blow from Musashi's wooden sword that ended the match, snuffing out Yoshioka's breath as he fell to the ground, barely alive. As he had been felled by a single blow, Musashi decided not to end his life. Seijirō's students picked up their limp master and carried him away on a board. After undergoing a course of medical treatment and bathing at hot springs, he recovered but he gave up swordsmanship and became a priest.

Later on, Musashi pitted himself against Yoshioka Denshichirō on the outer periphery of the capital, Kyoto. Denshichirō arrived at the site of the duel with a wooden sword measuring more than five feet [1.5 meters] in length. Undaunted, Musashi tussled with his foe and after wresting his weapon from him, delivered a fatal blow with it. The hapless Yoshioka fell to the ground and died soon after.

Yoshioka disciples schemed revenge, justifying their underhand tactics by saying “It is permissible in strategy to do what needs to be done though it is deemed dishonorable. All armies must concoct plans to prevail in war.” They congregated at a place called Sagarimatsu on the outskirts of Kyoto with Yoshioka Matashichirō. He and several hundred of his disciples, with staffs and bows in hand, assembled with the intention of destroying Musashi.

Musashi was astute enough to know what his opponent was planning, and he also knew that an opportunity would present itself to him in spite of their efforts. Seeing through the Yoshioka strategy, he told his own disciples to hang back as the affair was not their concern. "What if hordes of angry men come for your blood?" they cried? "I will observe them passively as if watching the clouds float by in the sky. What have I to fear?" he replied.

When the intrepid Musashi charged head first into the fray, they dispersed in terror as if being hunted by a wild animal. Too frightened to carry on, they left the scene. The people of Kyoto were astonished at Musashi's courage and remarkable strategy that allowed a single man to defeat many foes. What unknown wisdom underpinned his swordsmanship? The Yoshioka clan were teachers of the art of war to noblemen. Their reputation preceded them as genuine masters in the art of the sword. Even during the rule of the shogun, Ashikaga Yoshiteru, Muni [Musashi's adoptive father] was summoned to take part in three matches against the Yoshioka school's patriarch in front of the shogun himself. Yoshioka triumphed in one of the bouts, but winning two of the three, Muni was declared "Peerless swordsman of the realm." Musashi had already successfully engaged in several matches against the Yoshioka family during his time in the capital. Through their defeats, the reputation of the mighty house of Yoshioka started to decline.

There was another renowned swordsman in the land known as Ganryū. He wanted to challenge Musashi to a duel to settle the issue of who was the better warrior. To this end, he challenged Musashi to a test of mortal combat with swords. Musashi said, "Please use a real sword and savor its merits. I, however, will use a wooden sword to teach you of its higher principles." The contest was arranged.

In the narrow strait between Nagato and Buzen there lies an island known as Funajima. It was here that the contest was to take place, and a time was agreed upon. Ganryū arrived with his sword measuring more than three feet [1 meter] in length. He fought Musashi in mortal combat, but Musashi knocked him dead with a single blow of his wooden sword during a flash of thunder and lightning. Following this momentous duel, the name of the island was changed to Ganyūjima.

Musashi took part in more than sixty duels from the age of thirteen through to thirty. Never once did he fail to win, but he would say that he was only the winner if he was able to hit his adversary between the eyebrows. This was something he maintained his whole life.

There must be thousands, no, tens of thousands of men who have engaged in mortal combat but none can compare to the greatness of Musashi. He is the one and only and his fame has spread far and wide across the four seas. All and sundry know and praise the name. His memory lingers deep in all who understand such matters. He is remembered as a man who was peculiar but extraordinary and in a class of his own. Musashi was truly a man of incredible strength and spirit. He would say that the art of swordsmanship can only be learned by the heart through arduous training. "Once the self has been liberated through training, commanding an army or governing a province is surely not difficult to achieve."

Musashi was already well-known for his skill in swordsmanship when Ishida Jibunoshō, a vassal of the Toyotomi clan, staged his rebellion and when Hideyori's insurgencies were carried out in Osaka and Settsu. But no words can truly describe his greatness and courage. Musashi knew correct etiquette, music, archery, horsemanship, writing, arithmetic and the classics. He was talented in the genteel arts. In fact, there was little he was not gifted in. As he lay on his deathbed in Higo, he wrote, "Looking up at Heaven, the strategy of ultimate reality and harmony, even with my death, will endure forever."

As his devoted son, I hereby place this monument in his honor so that all may know of this great man's life. I sincerely hope that generations of people will read my eulogy to this astonishing man. So great he was!

Erected by Miyamoto Iori.